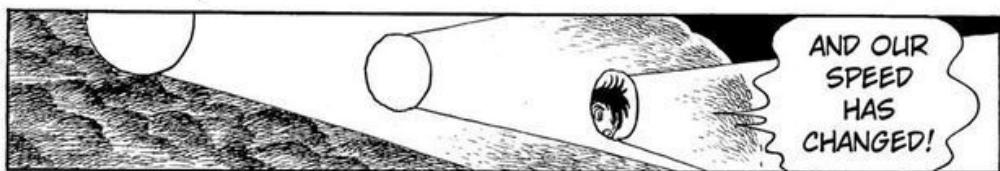
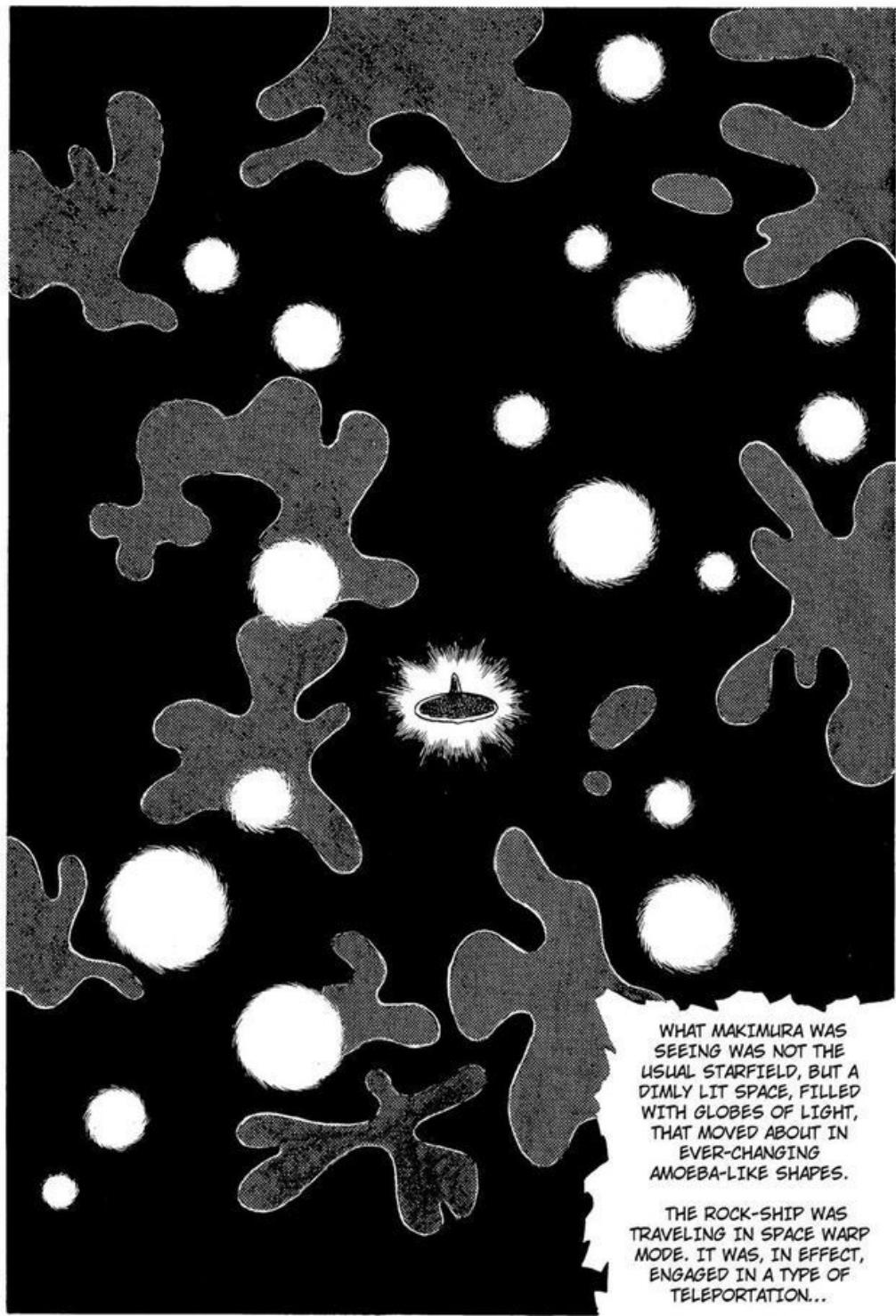




I CAN'T SEE ANY STARS ANYMORE!





WHAT MAKIMURA WAS SEEING WAS NOT THE USUAL STARFIELD, BUT A DIMLY LIT SPACE, FILLED WITH GLOBES OF LIGHT, THAT MOVED ABOUT IN EVER-CHANGING AMOEBA-LIKE SHAPES.

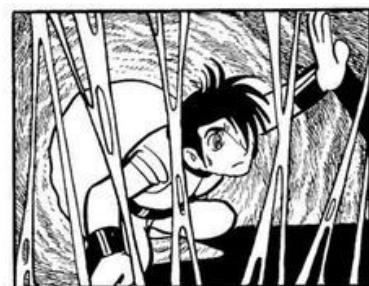
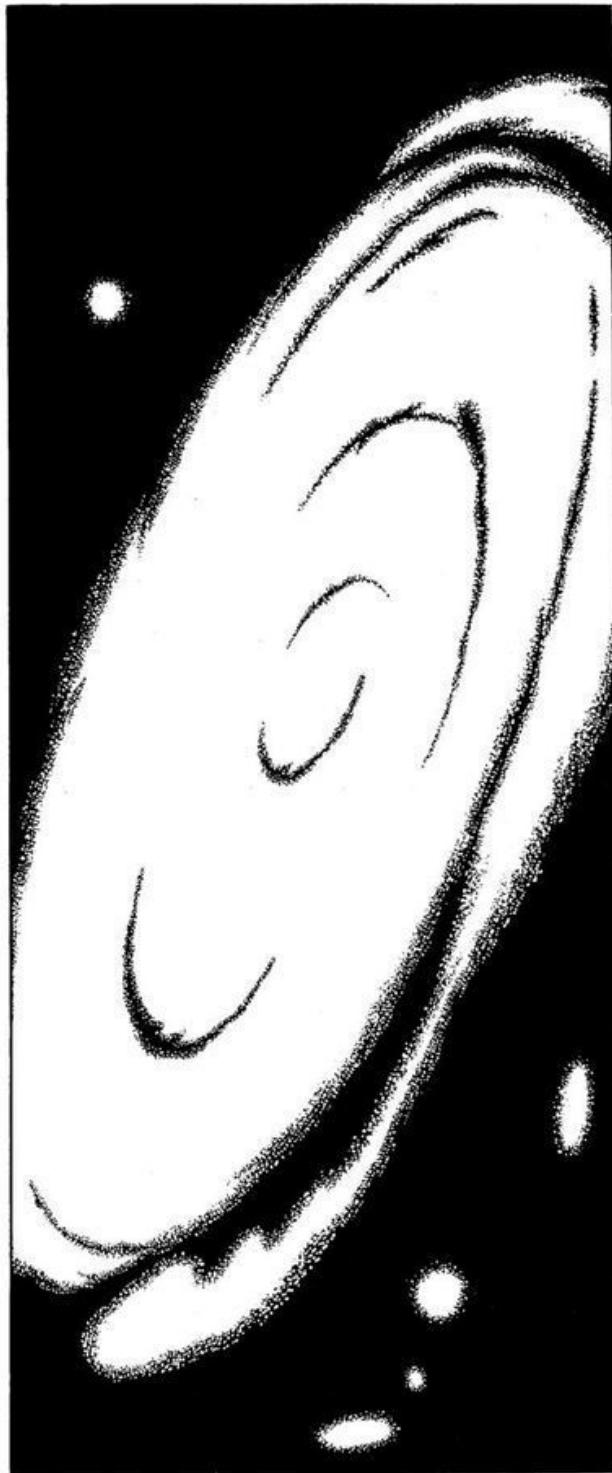
THE ROCK-SHIP WAS TRAVELING IN SPACE WARP MODE. IT WAS, IN EFFECT, ENGAGED IN A TYPE OF TELEPORTATION...

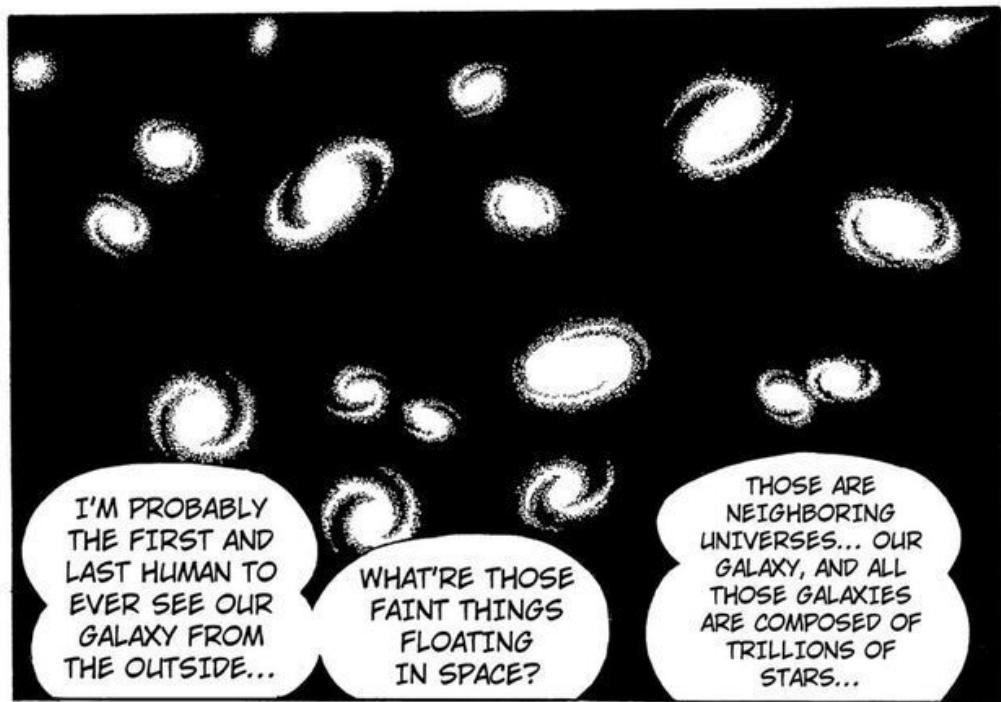
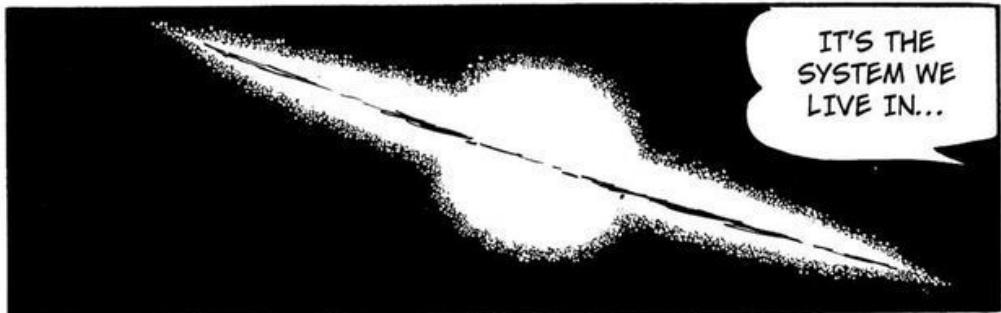
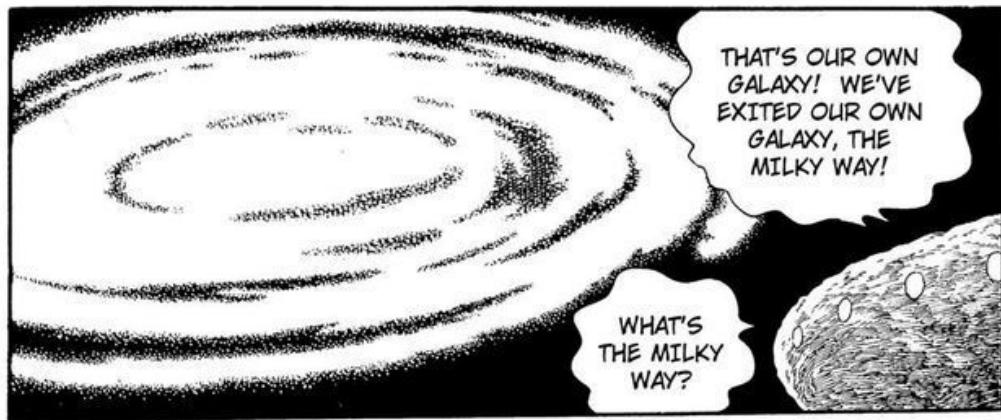


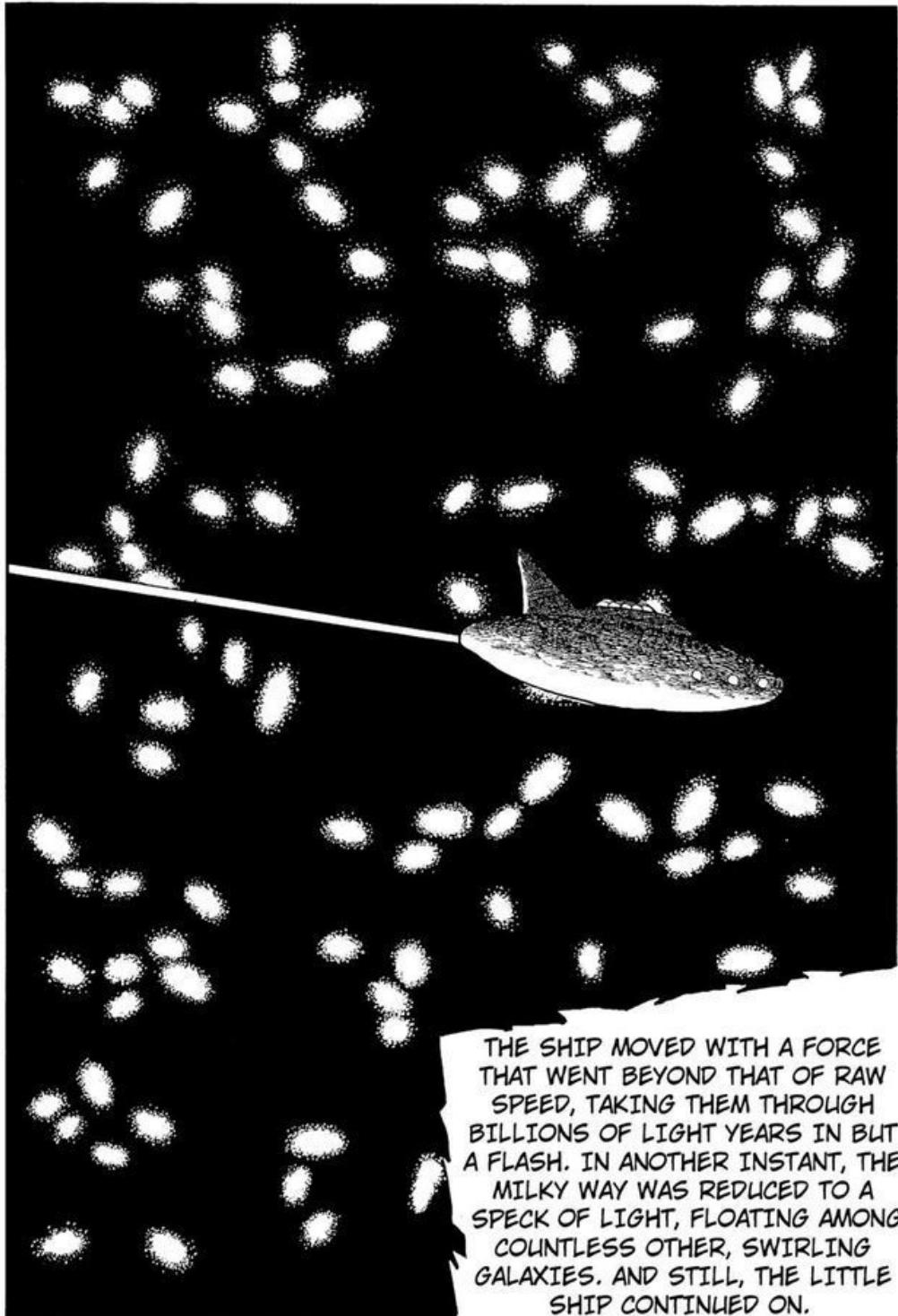
I DON'T
WANT TO
GO
OUTSIDE
THE
GALAXY!

TAKE US
BACK!

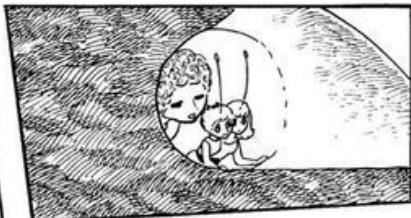


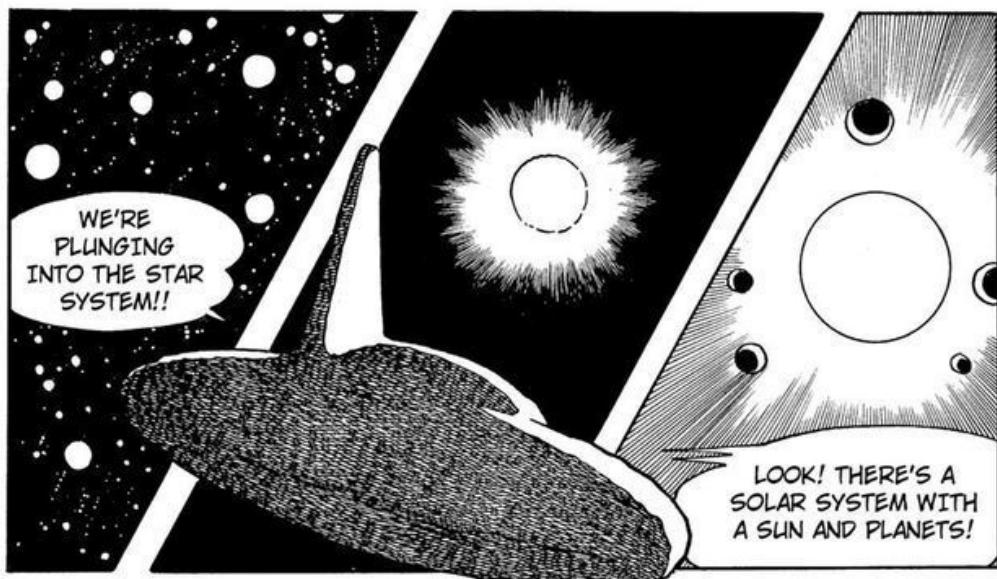


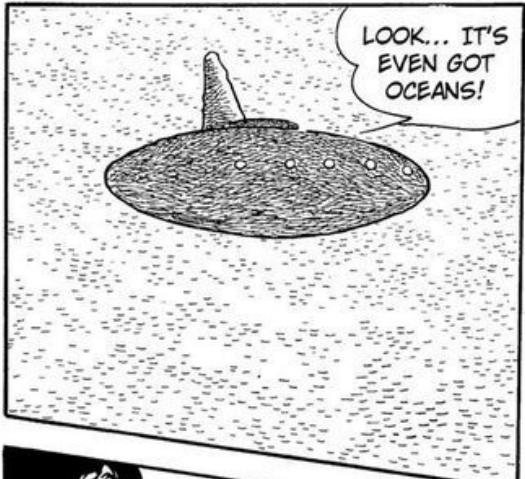


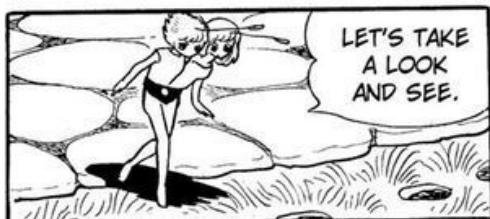
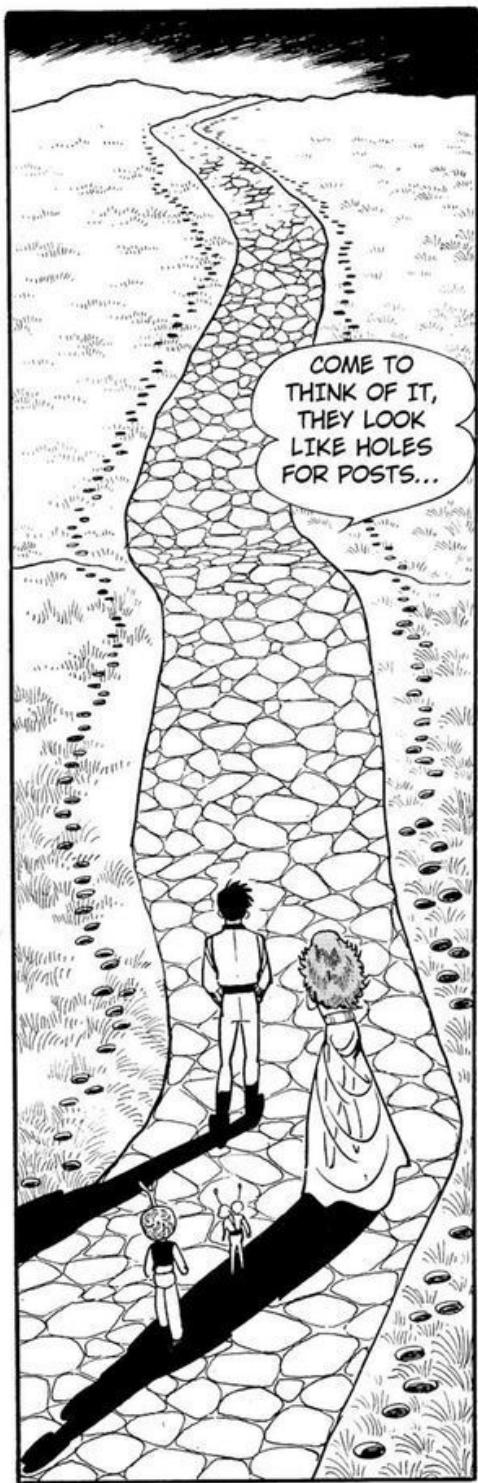


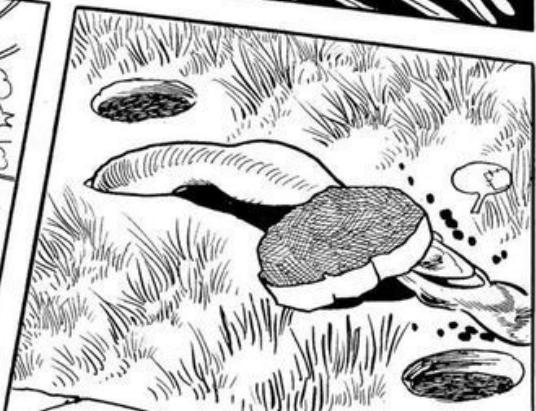
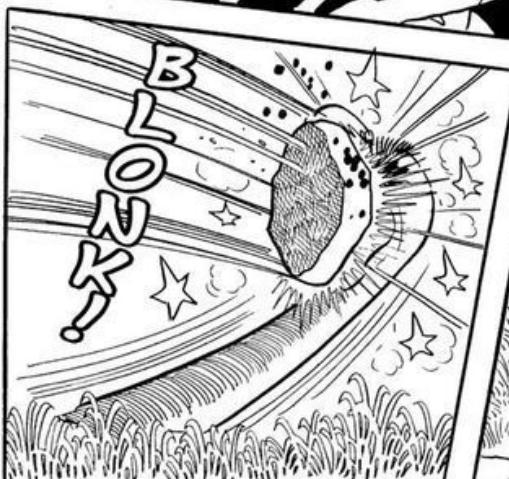
THE SHIP MOVED WITH A FORCE THAT WENT BEYOND THAT OF RAW SPEED, TAKING THEM THROUGH BILLIONS OF LIGHT YEARS IN BUT A FLASH. IN ANOTHER INSTANT, THE MILKY WAY WAS REDUCED TO A SPECK OF LIGHT, FLOATING AMONG COUNTLESS OTHER, SWIRLING GALAXIES. AND STILL, THE LITTLE SHIP CONTINUED ON.

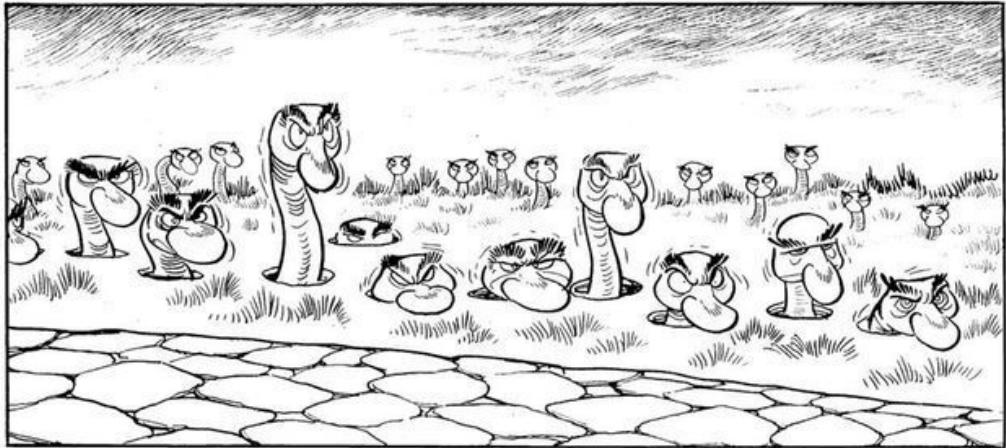


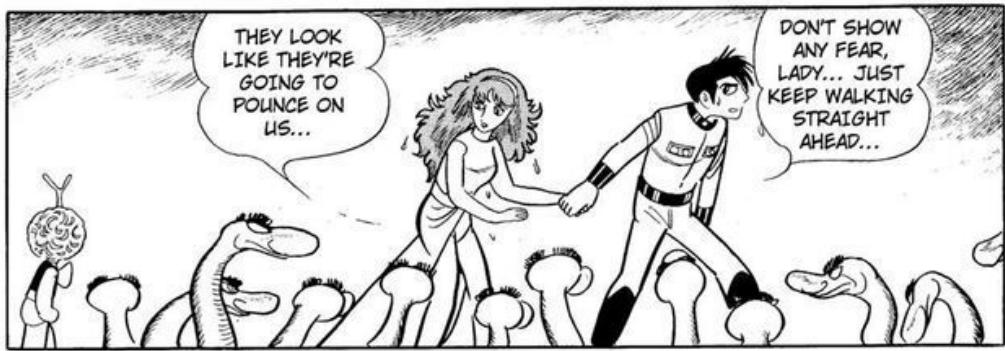




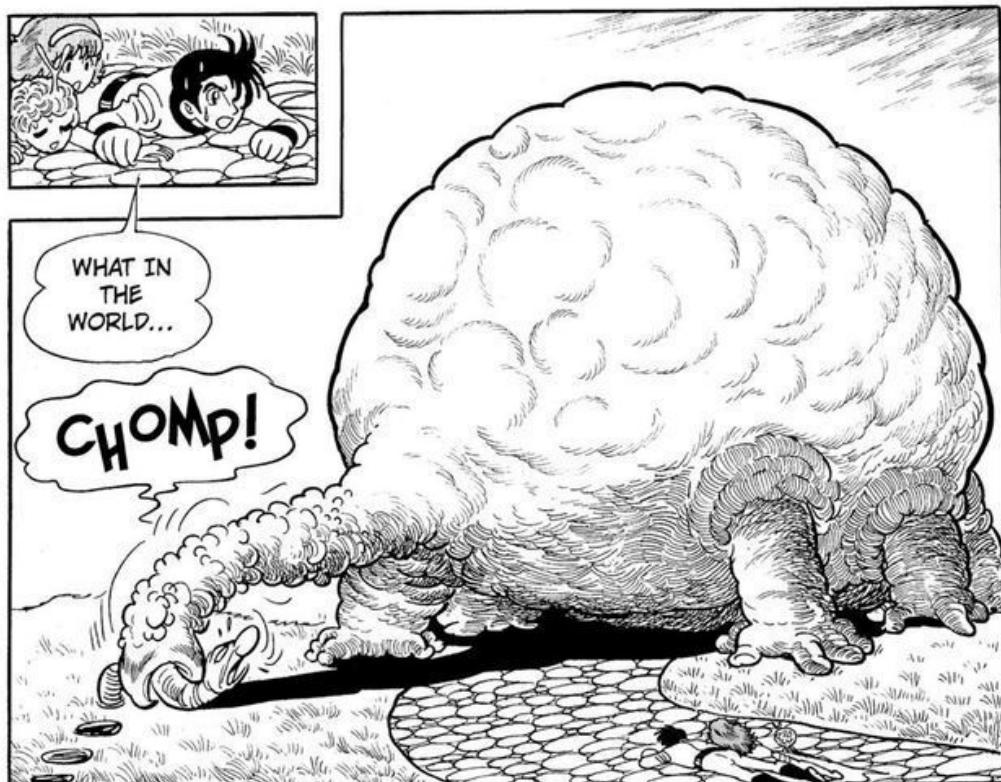
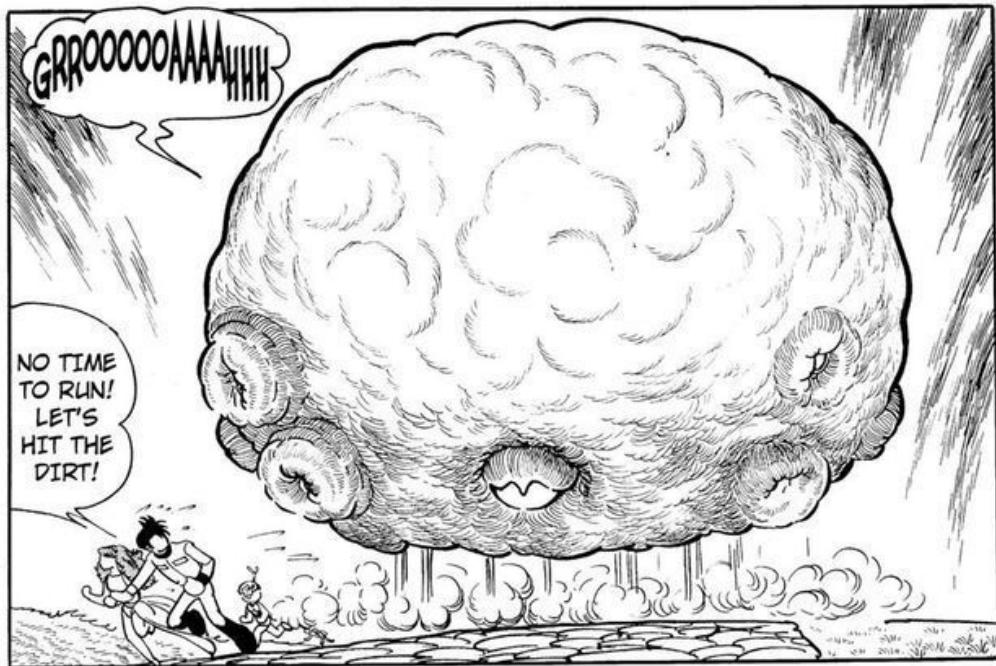


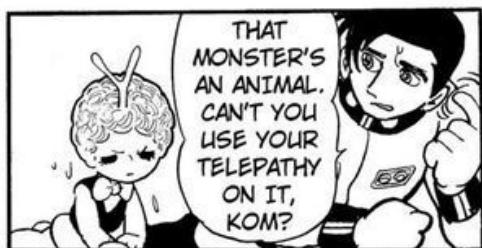
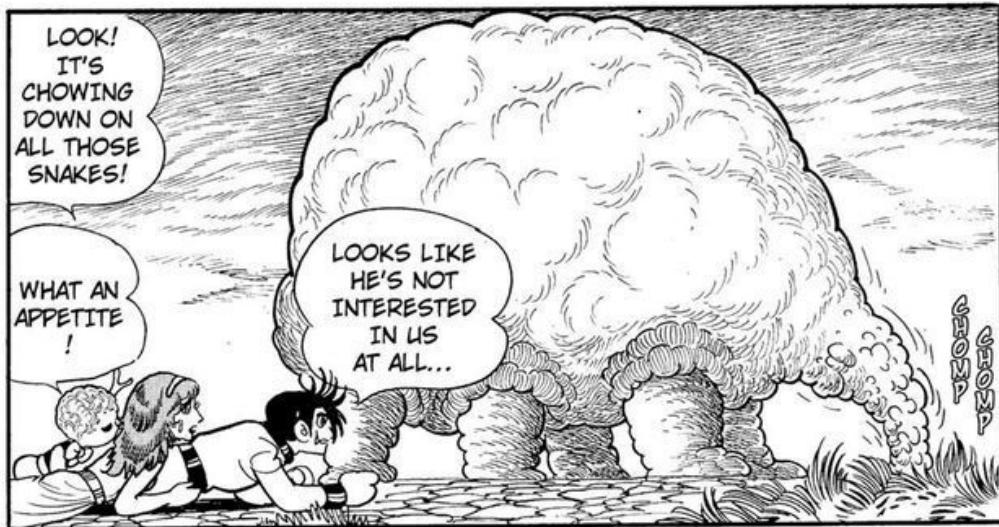
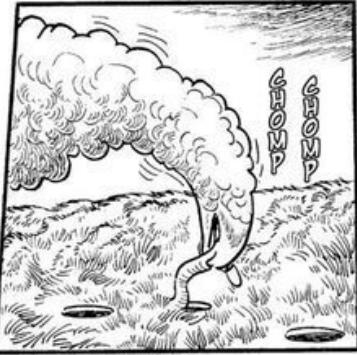


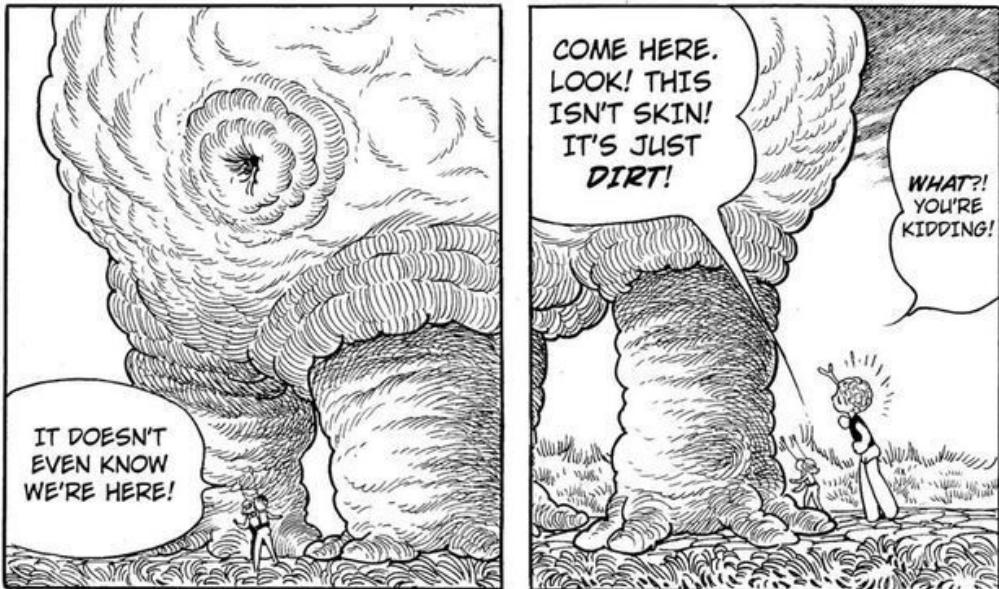


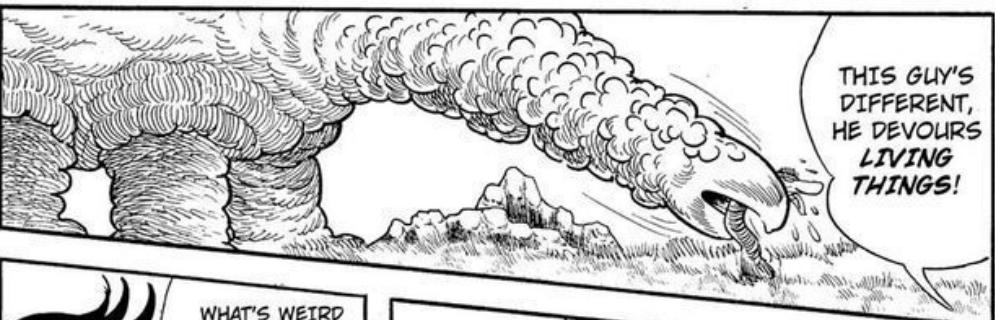
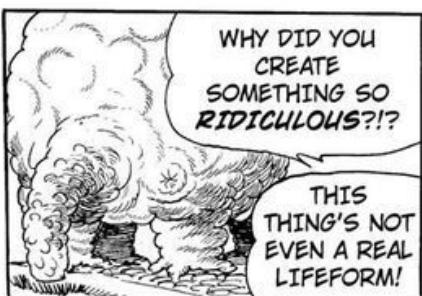


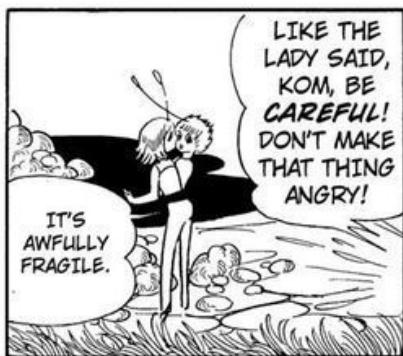


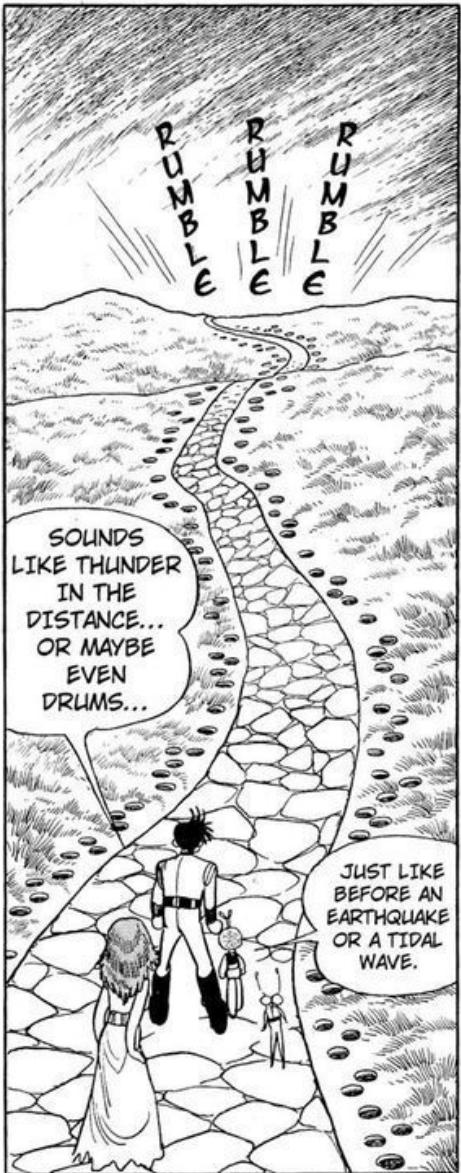


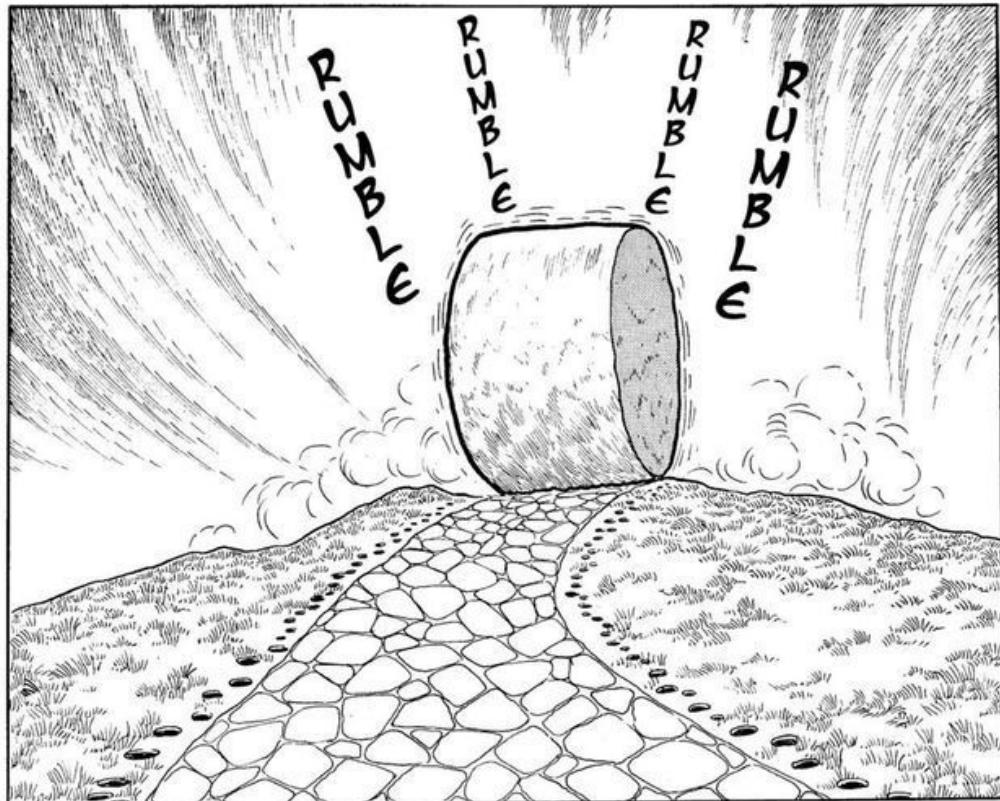


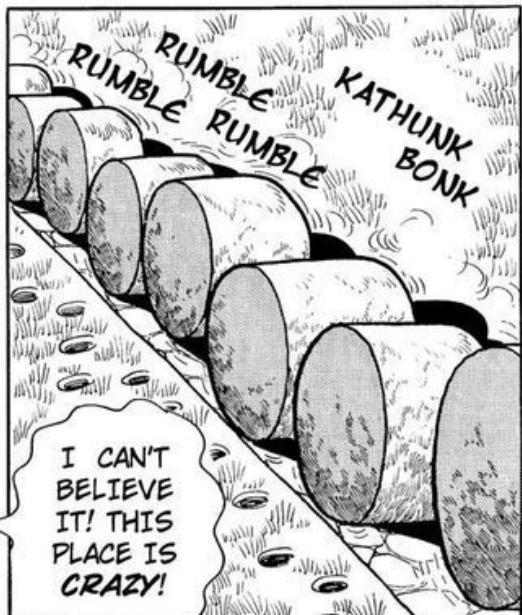
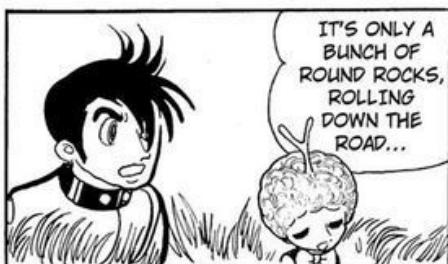
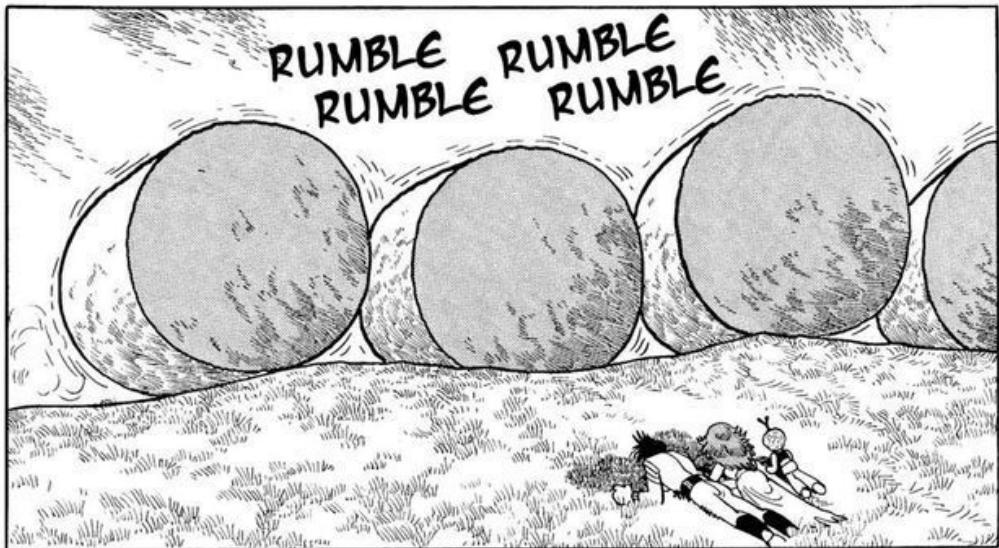


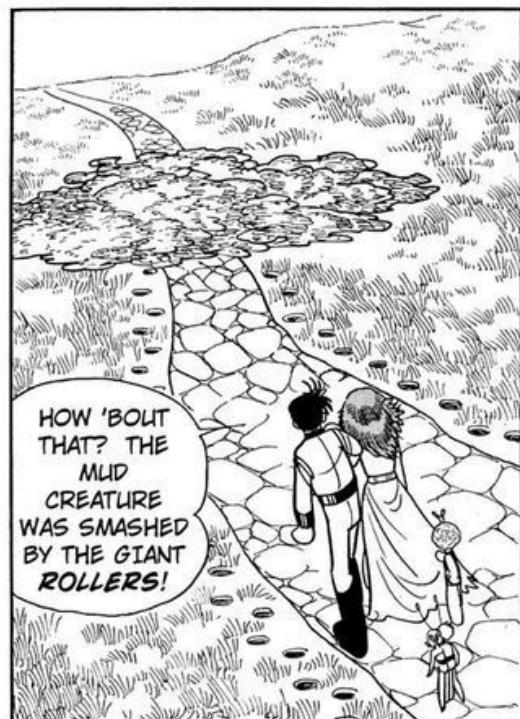
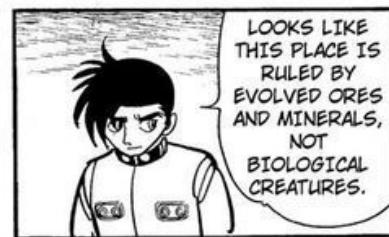


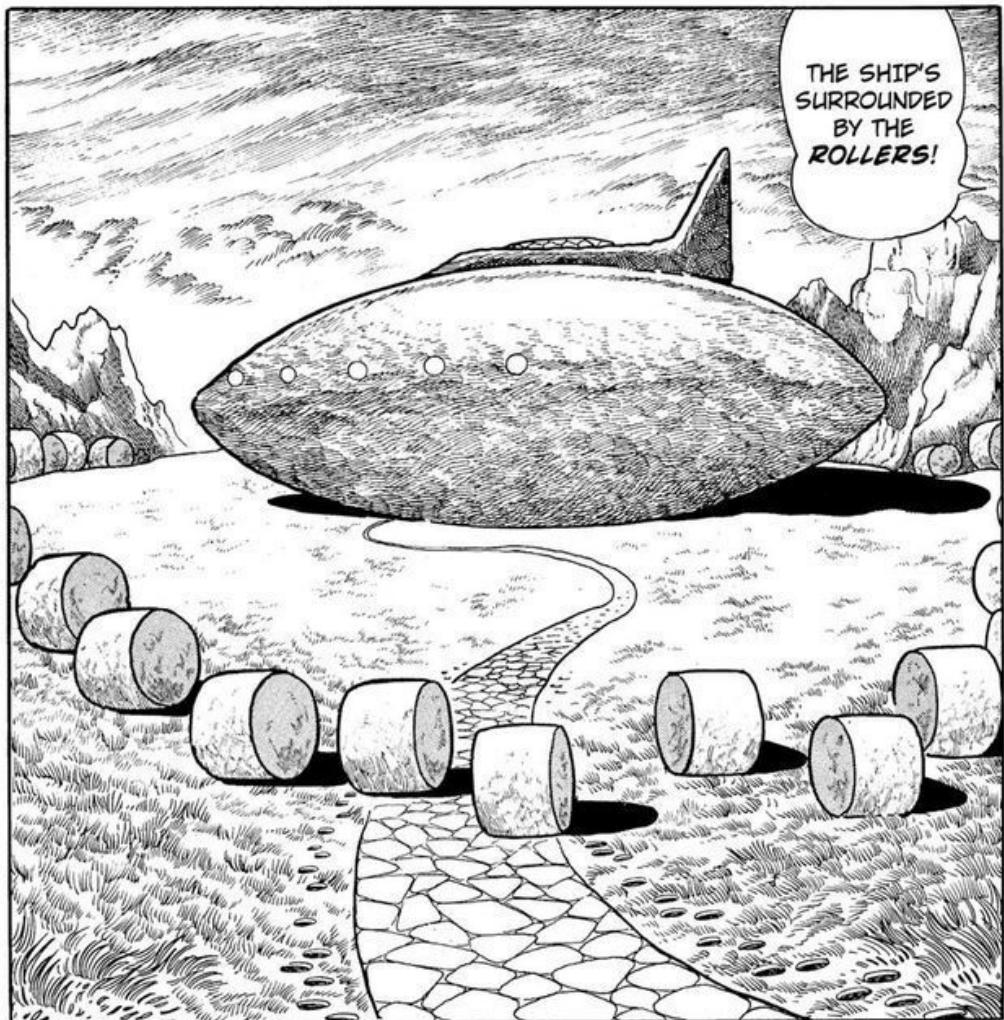


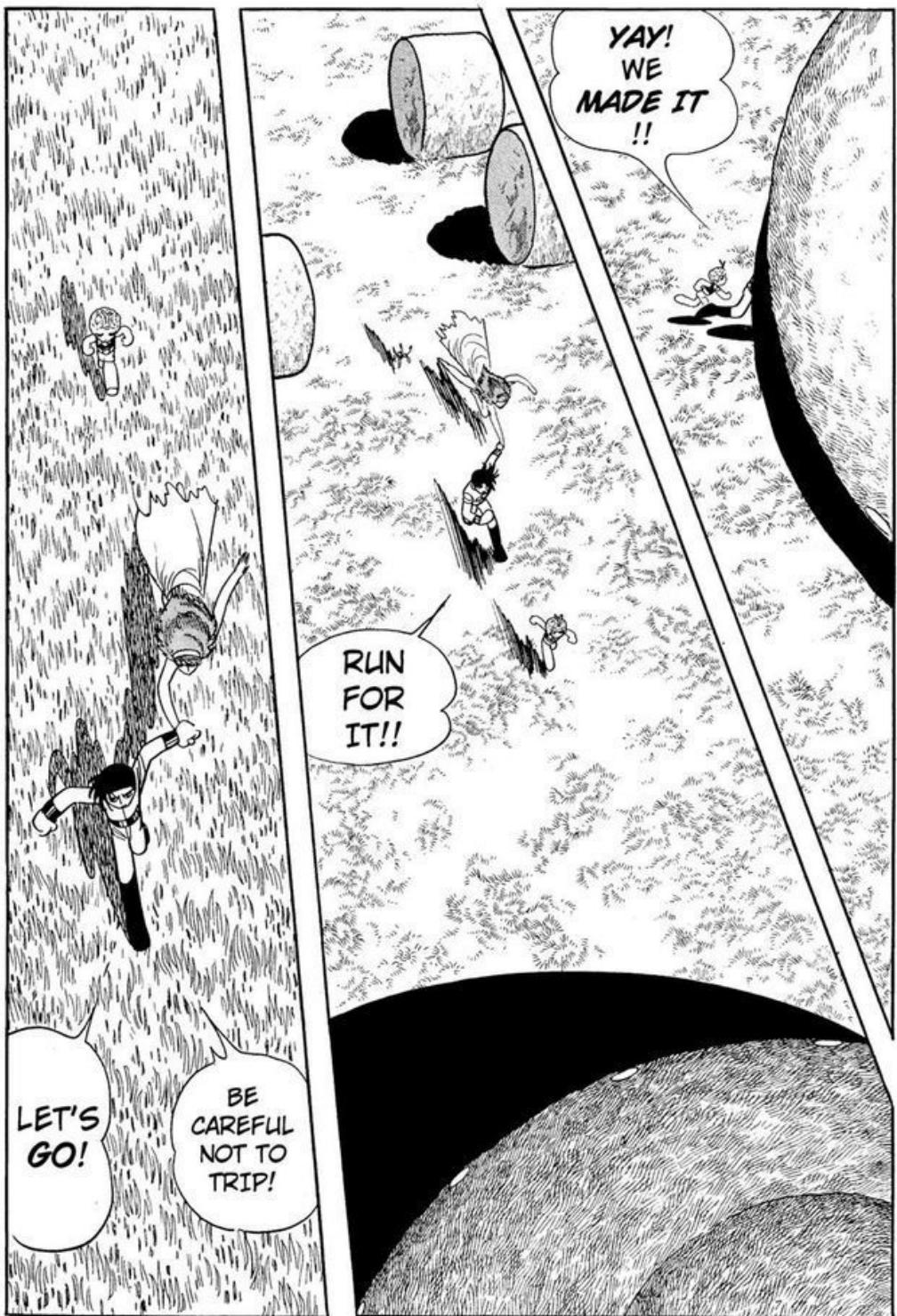


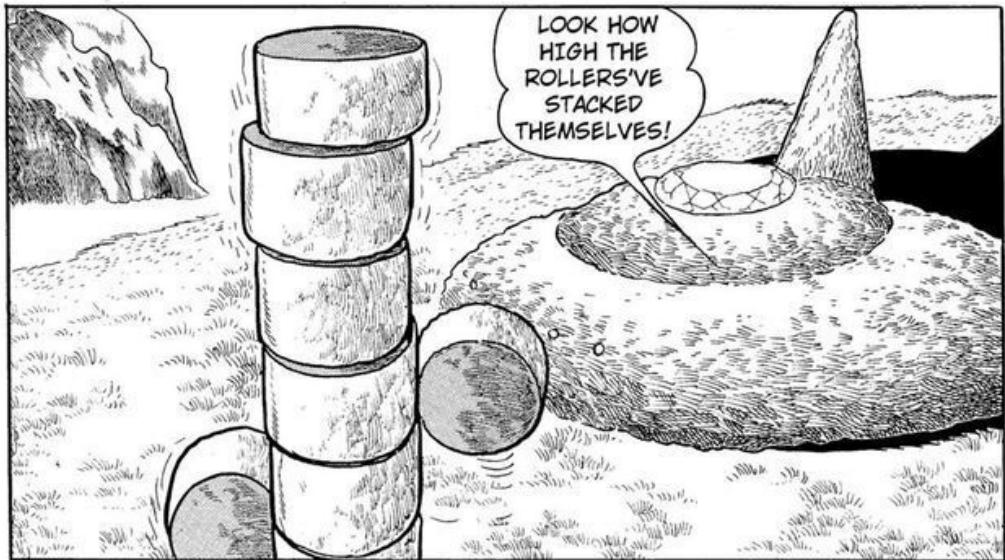
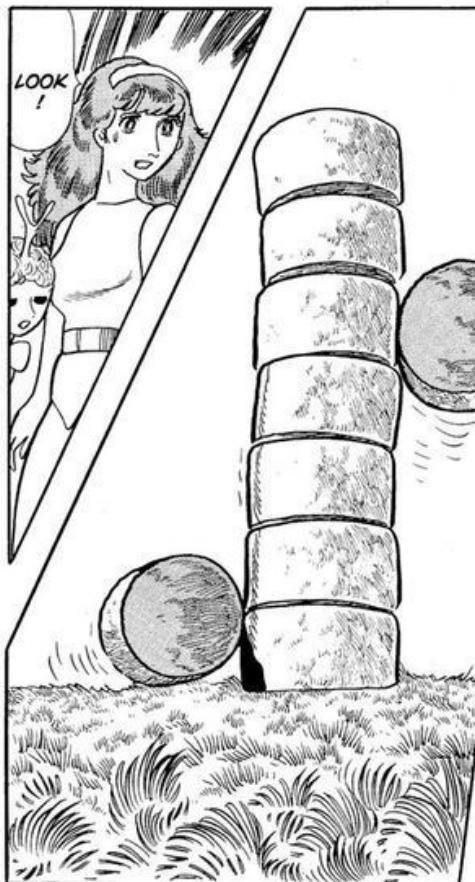


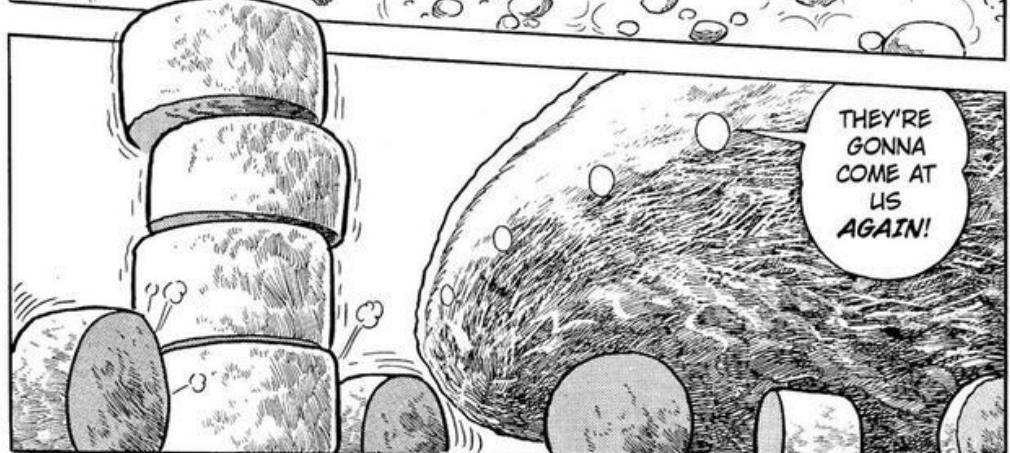


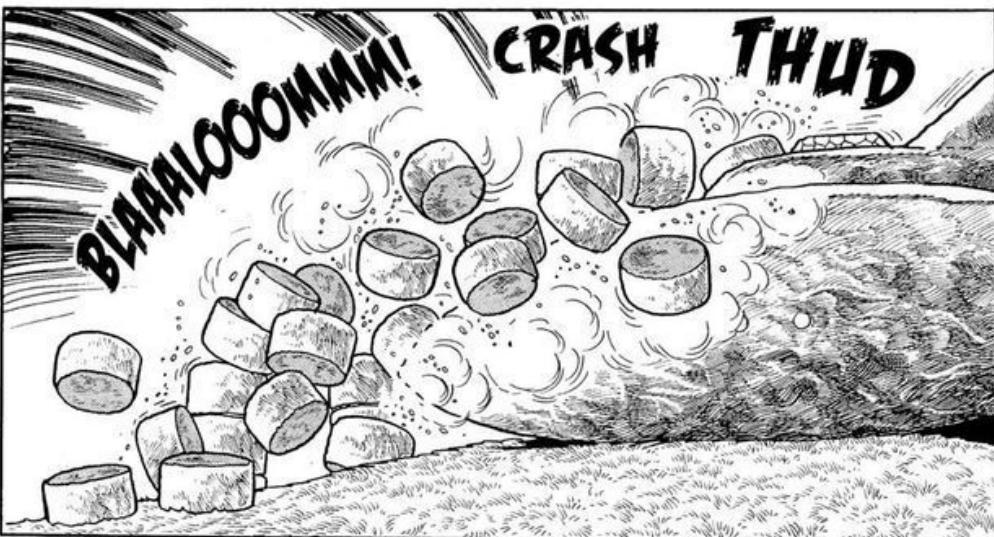
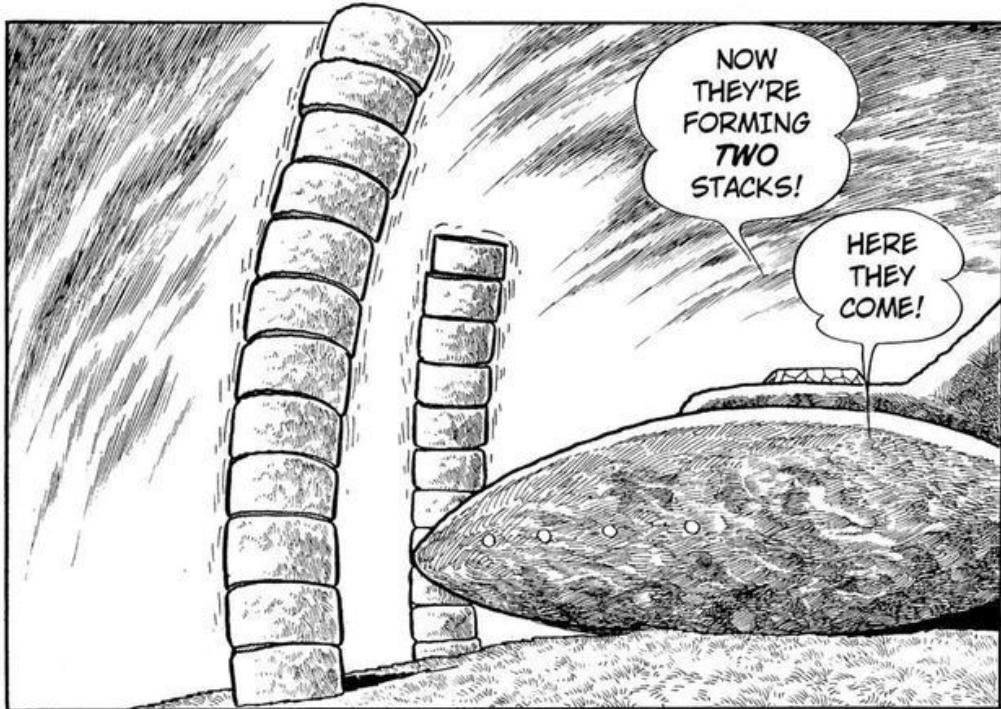


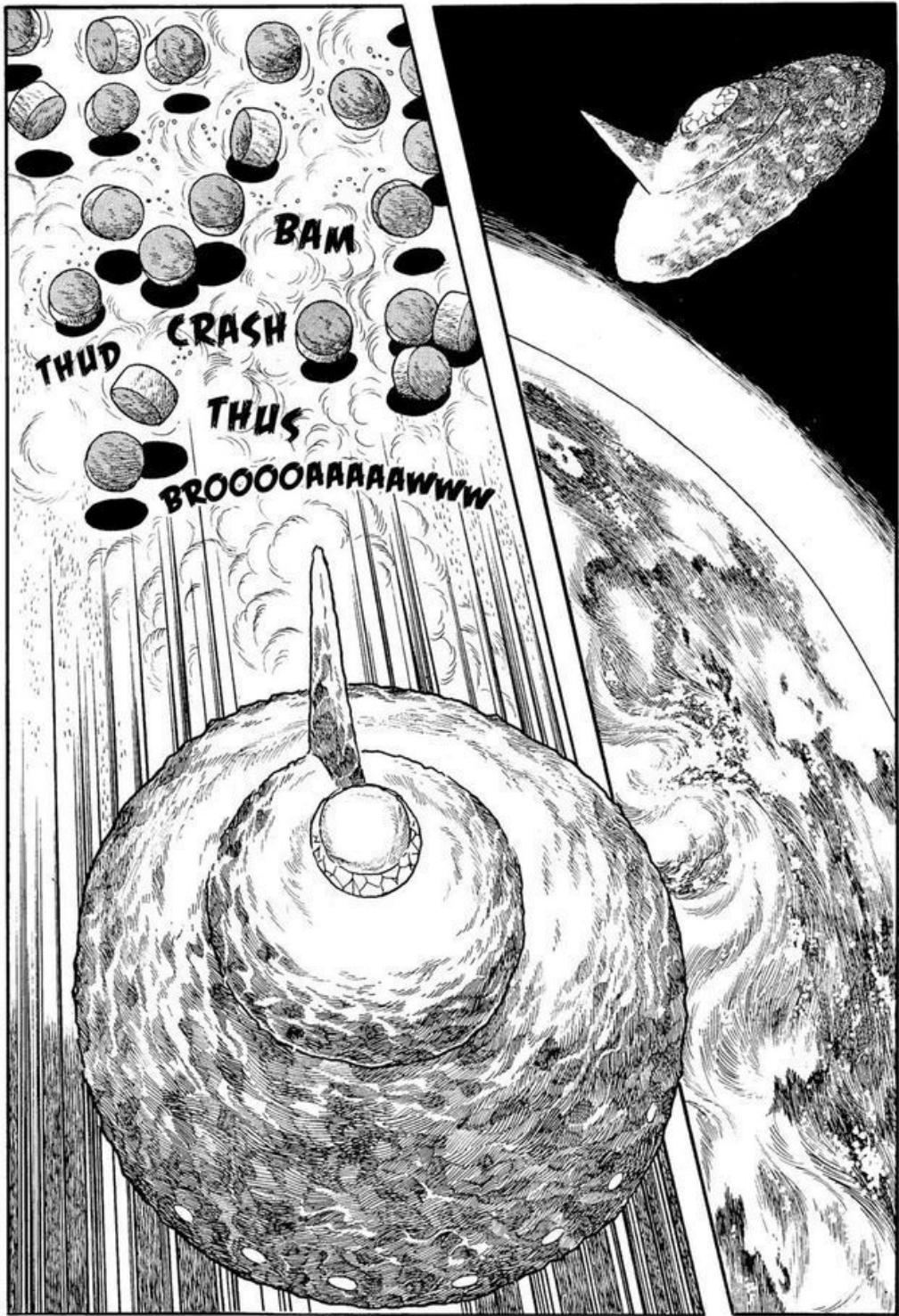


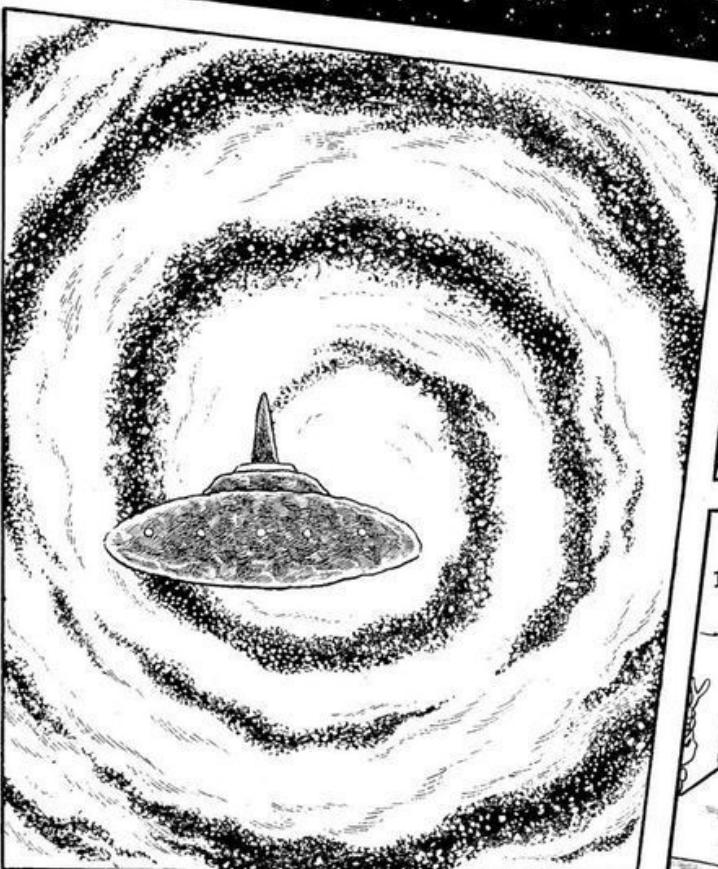


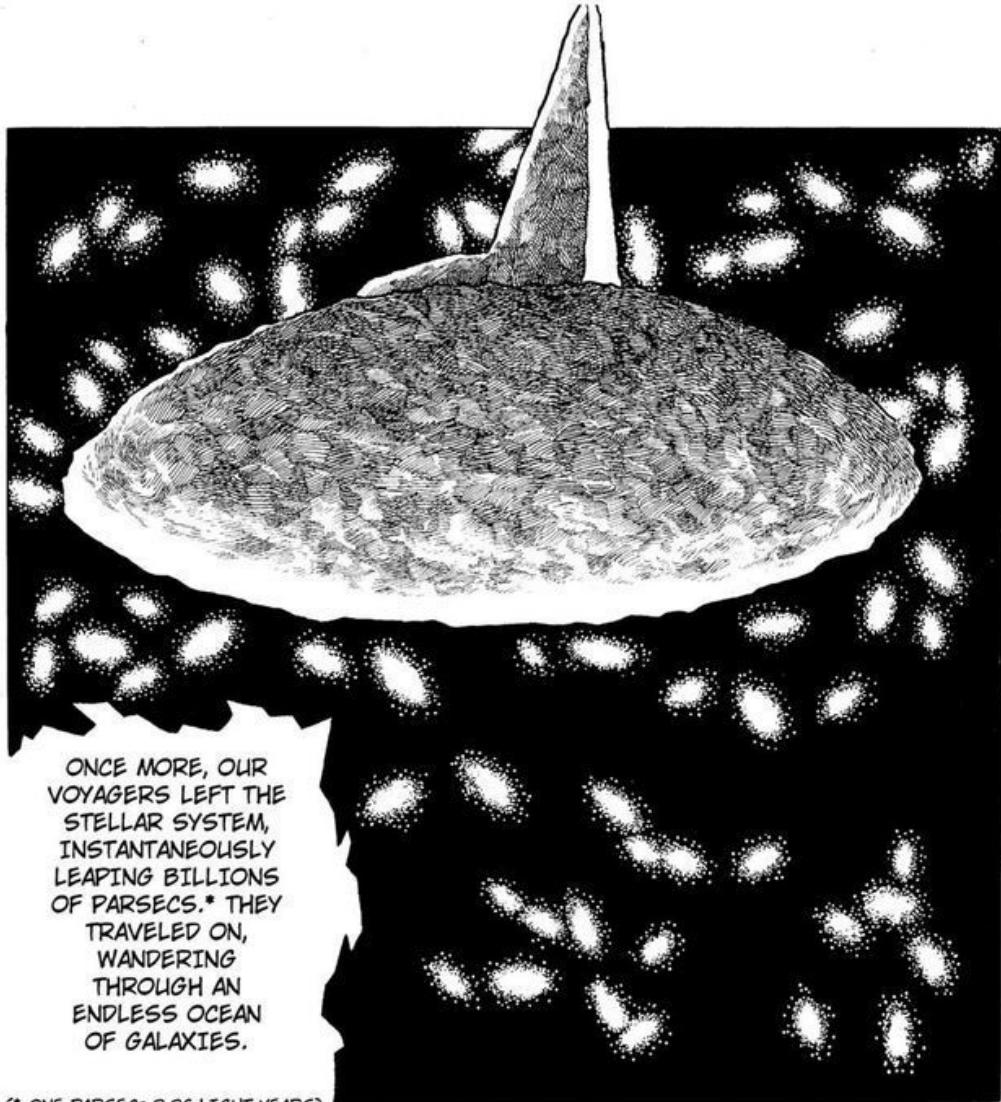






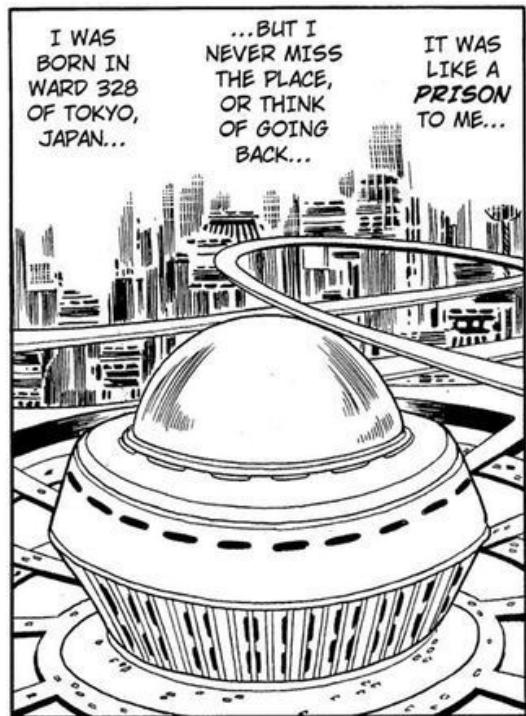


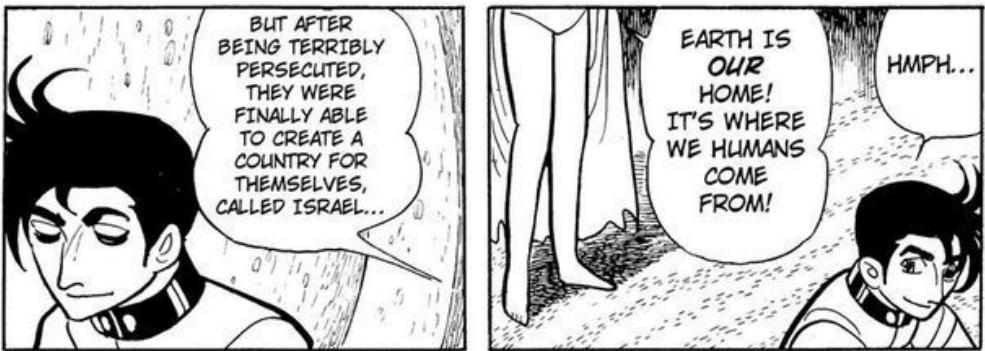


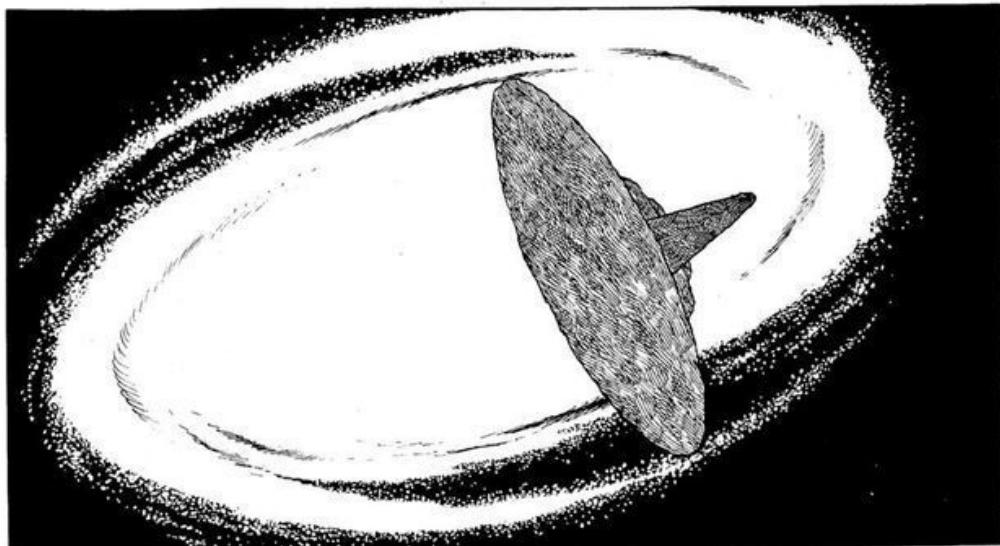


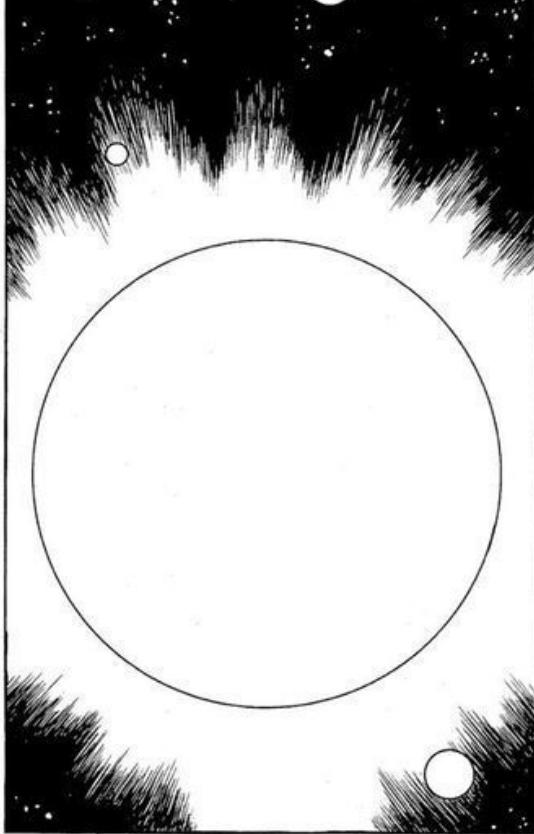
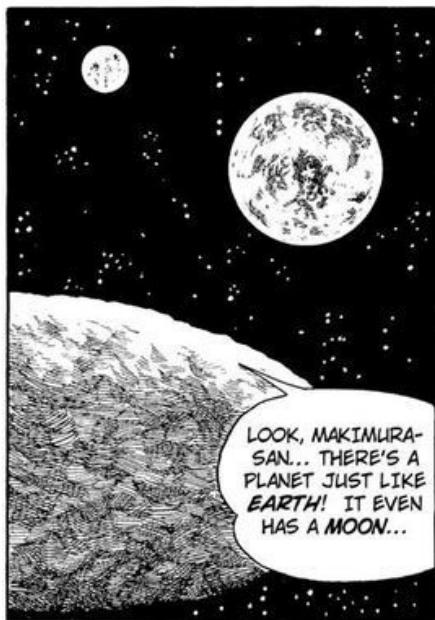
(* ONE PARSEC = 3.26 LIGHT YEARS)

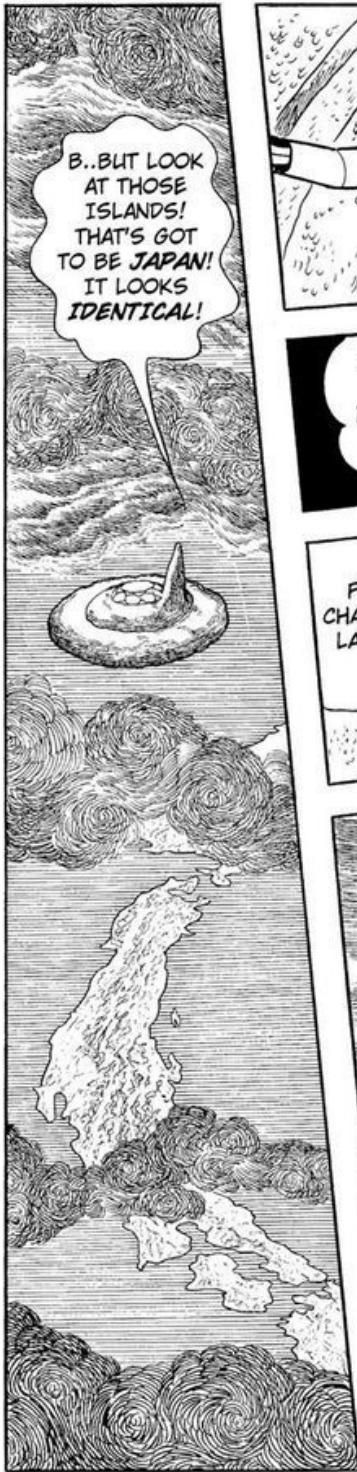


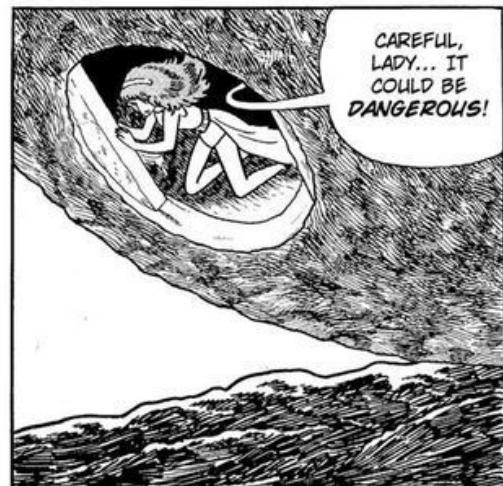
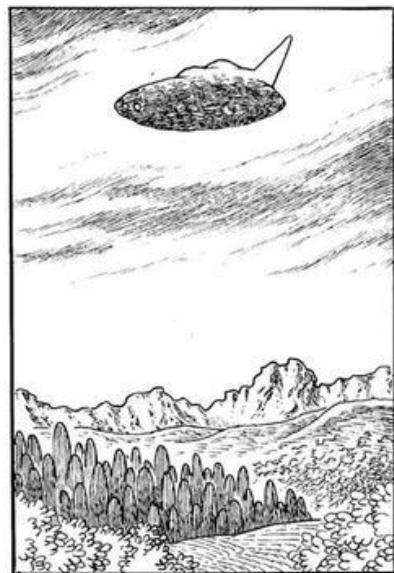
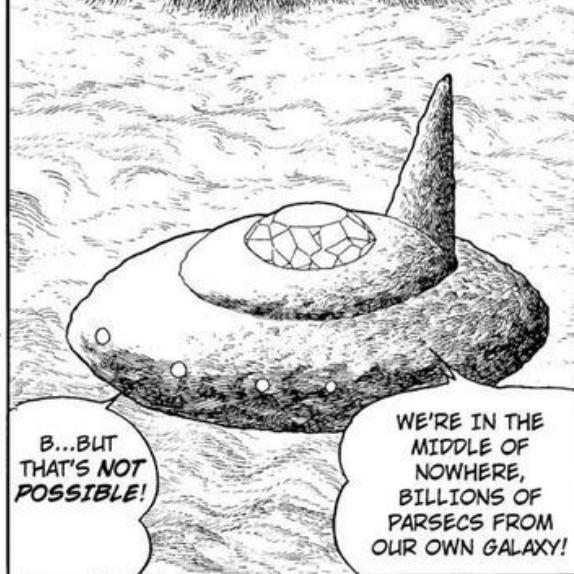














IT'S
ELECTRICITY
!!

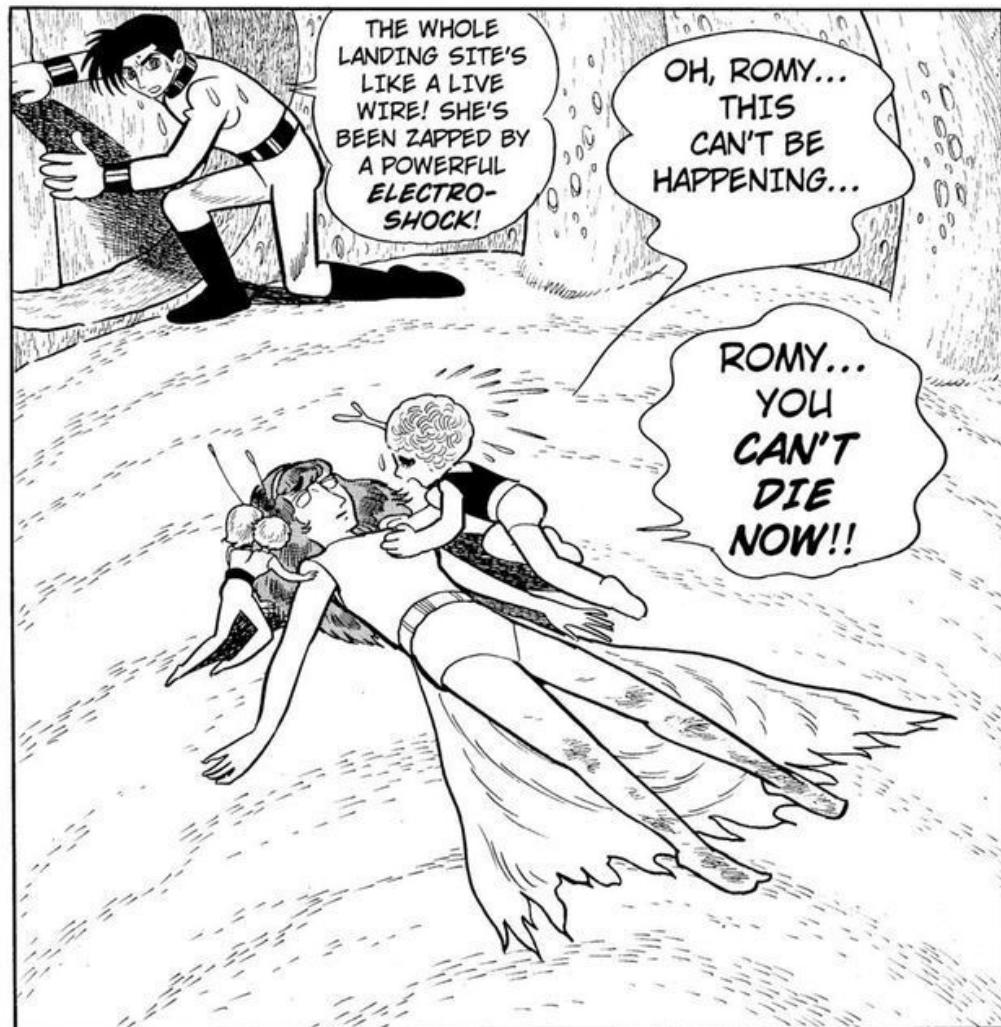
KOM!
COME
BACK,
YOU FOOL!

IT'S OKAY!
NORVA,
THROW ME
A ROPE!

MAKI-
MURA-
SAN!
WE'VE
GOT TO
HELP
ROMY!!

DON'T BE
STUPID,
KOM! THE
ENTIRE
SURFACE IS
ELECTRIFIED
...







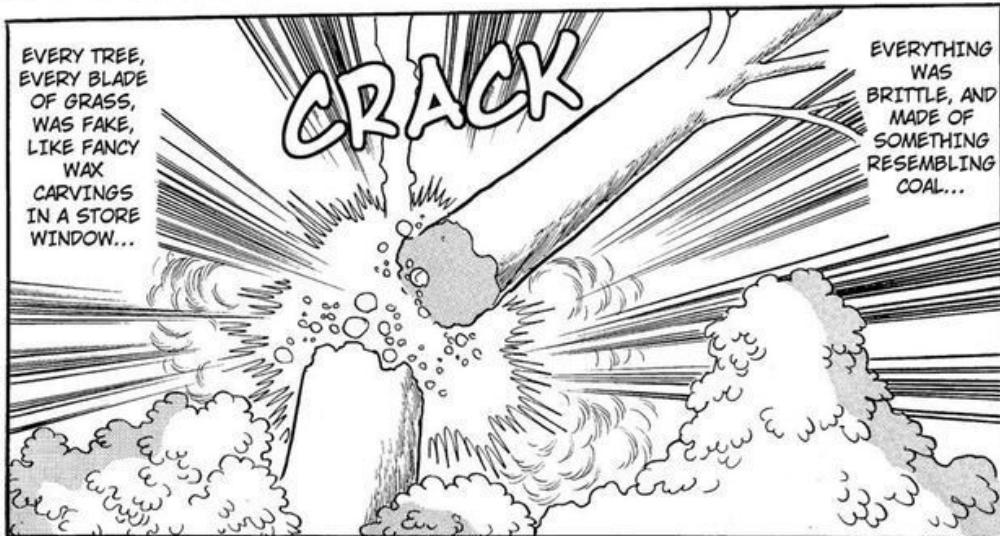
WITH ITS INVITING "GREENERY," AND WHAT APPEARED TO BE ROLLING FIELDS FULL OF FRUIT AND PRODUCE, WHO COULD POSSIBLY HAVE GUESSED THAT THE PLANET WAS REALLY LIKE A GIANT ELECTRIC CHAIR...?



BUT NOTHING WAS AS IT SEEMED TO BE...



...EVERYTHING ON THE ENTIRE PLANET WAS ACTUALLY FOSSILIZED!





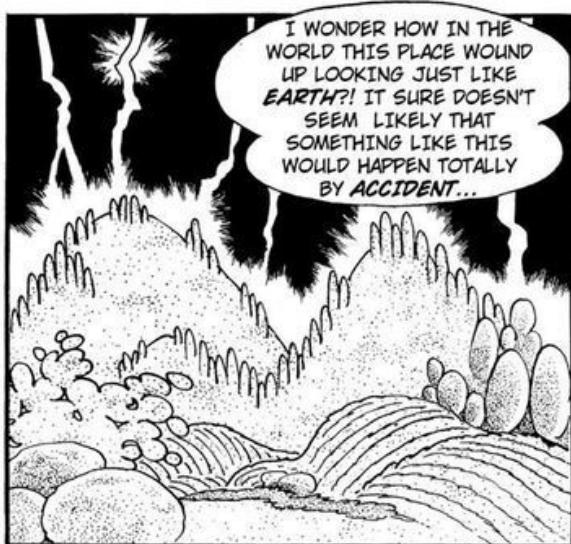
BOOOOM

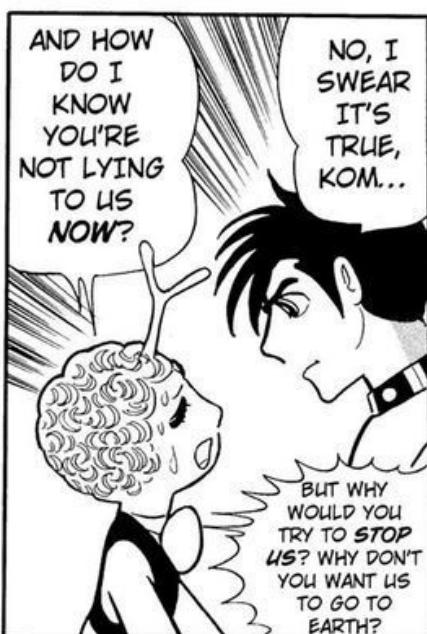
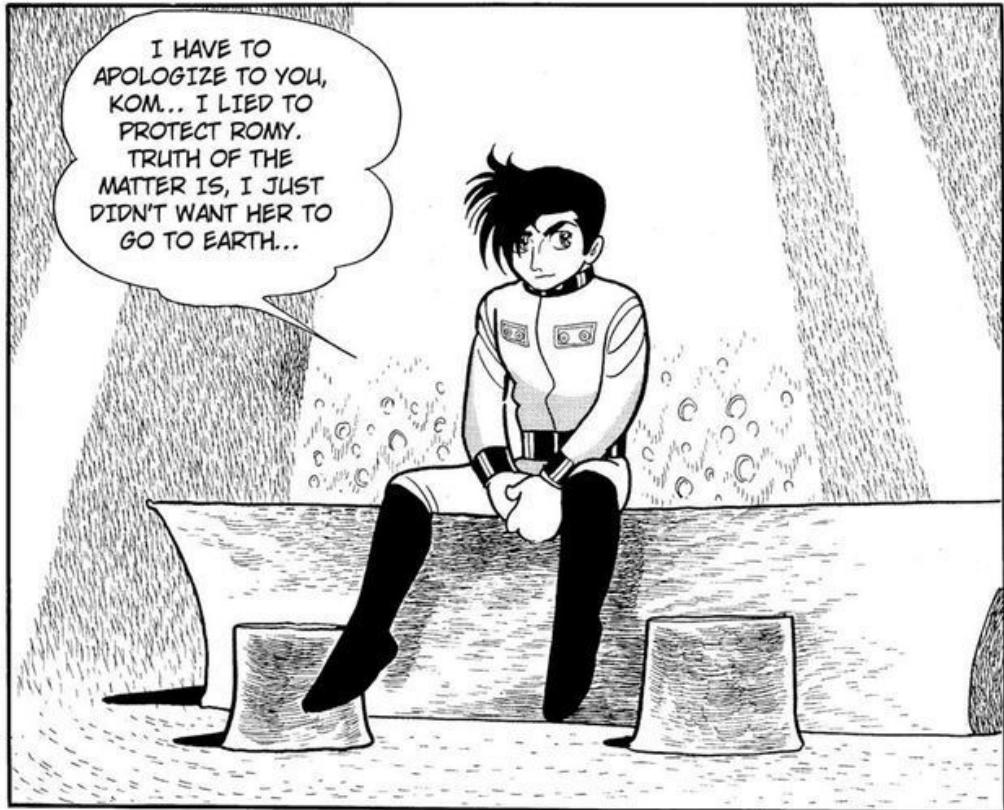
RUMBLE

ZAAAP

CRAACKLE









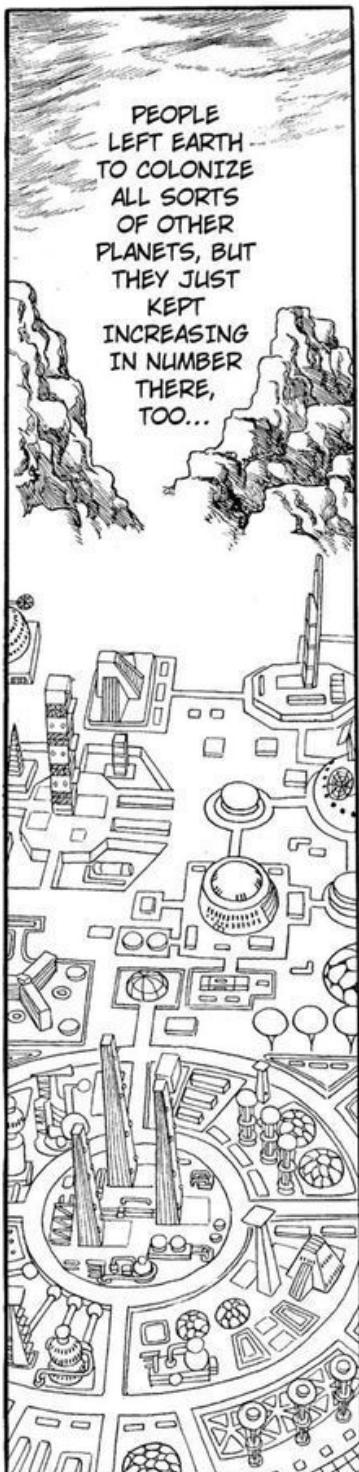
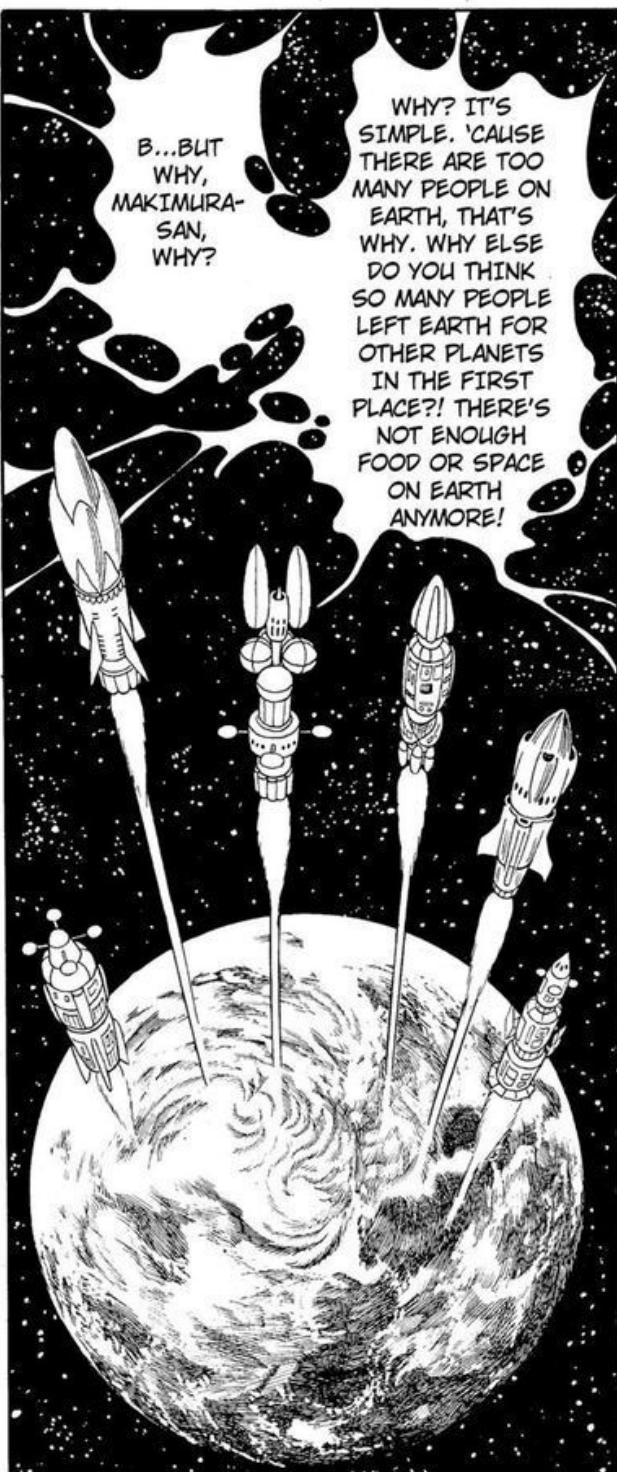
WHY NOT?
IS THERE
SOMETHING
WE DON'T
KNOW?



B...BUT
WHY,
MAKIMURA-
SAN,
WHY?

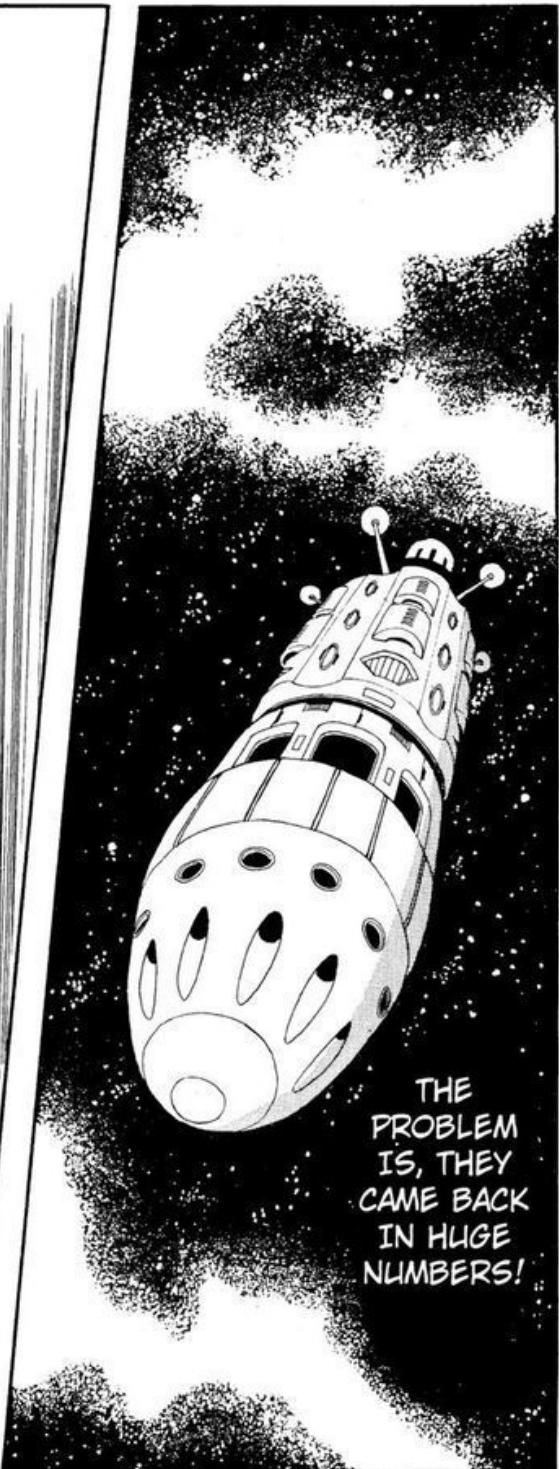
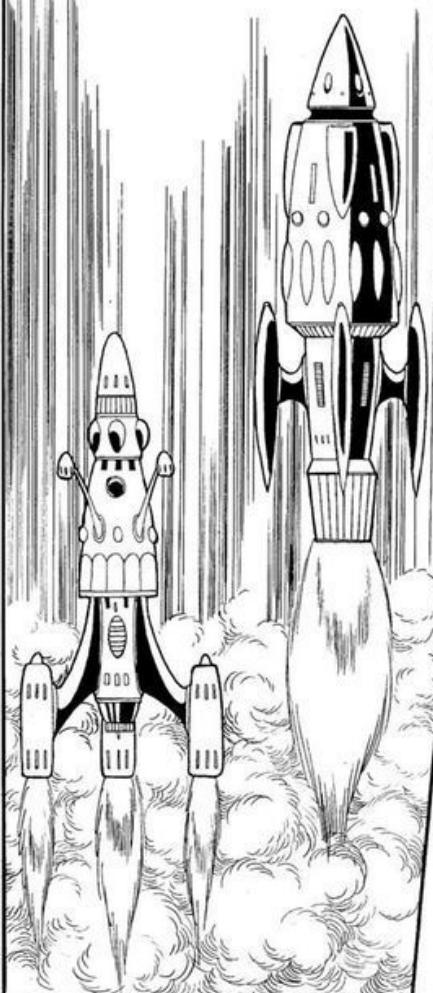
WHY? IT'S
SIMPLE. 'CAUSE
THERE ARE TOO
MANY PEOPLE ON
EARTH, THAT'S
WHY. WHY ELSE
DO YOU THINK
SO MANY PEOPLE
LEFT EARTH FOR
OTHER PLANETS
IN THE FIRST
PLACE?! THERE'S
NOT ENOUGH
FOOD OR SPACE
ON EARTH
ANYMORE!

PEOPLE
LEFT EARTH
TO COLONIZE
ALL SORTS
OF OTHER
PLANETS, BUT
THEY JUST
KEPT
INCREASING
IN NUMBER
THERE,
TOO...



AND AFTER LIVING
IN OUTERSPACE,
THE COLONISTS
EVENTUALLY ALL
BECAME NOSTALGIC
FOR EARTH. THEY
BECAME HOMESICK!

IT'S A NATURAL
REACTION FOR
PEOPLE BORN
THERE, I GUESS...



THE
PROBLEM
IS, THEY
CAME BACK
IN HUGE
NUMBERS!



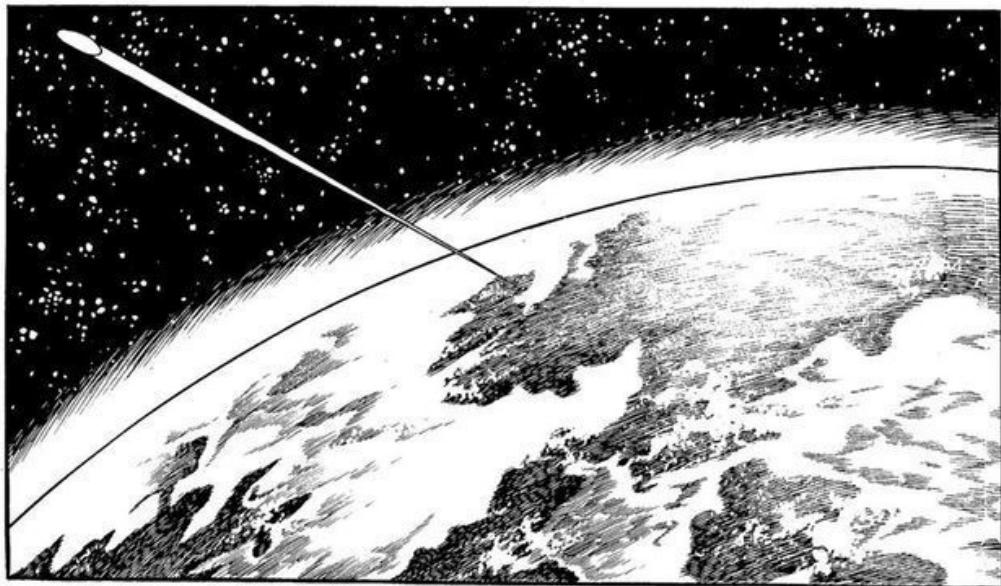
EVEN AFTER
THAT, THOUGH,
MILLIONS OF
COLONISTS
TRIED TO
SNEAK BACK
TO EARTH
ILLEGALLY...

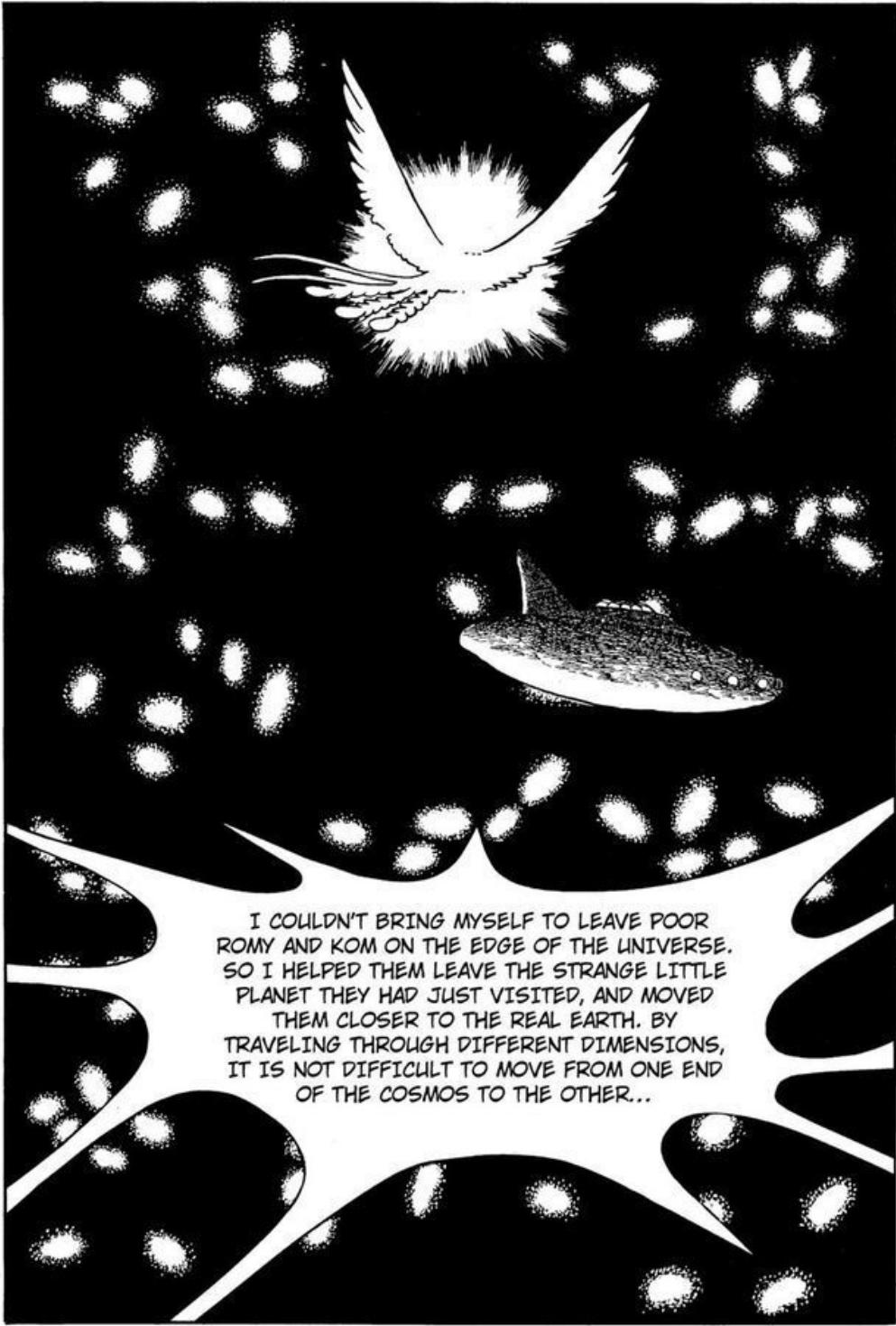
SO
EVENT-
HALLY...

... RETURN
IMMIGRATION
WAS
COMPLETELY
BANNED...

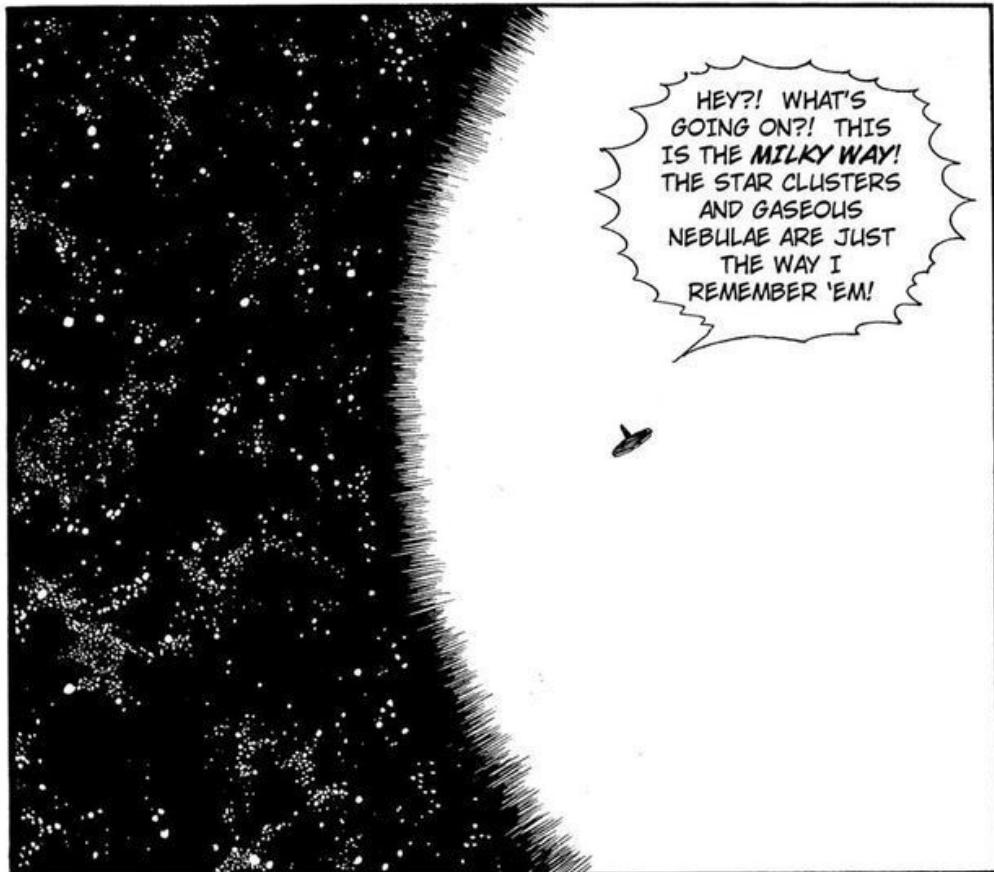
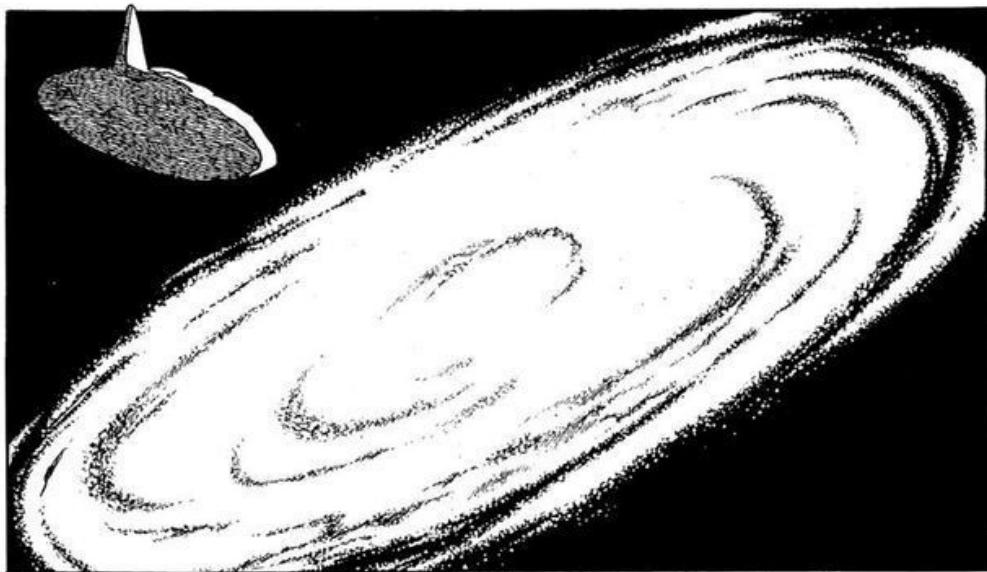
HAVING
ONCE LEFT
EARTH,
PEOPLE
WEREN'T
ALLOWED TO
RETURN
UNDER ANY
CONDITION,
AND IF THEY
TRIED THEY
WERE
DESTROYED
...



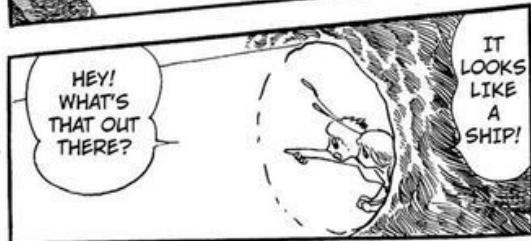
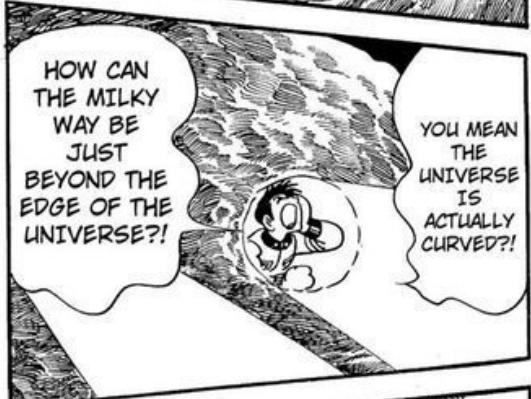




I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO LEAVE POOR
ROMY AND KOM ON THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE.
SO I HELPED THEM LEAVE THE STRANGE LITTLE
PLANET THEY HAD JUST VISITED, AND MOVED
THEM CLOSER TO THE REAL EARTH. BY
TRAVELING THROUGH DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS,
IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO MOVE FROM ONE END
OF THE COSMOS TO THE OTHER...

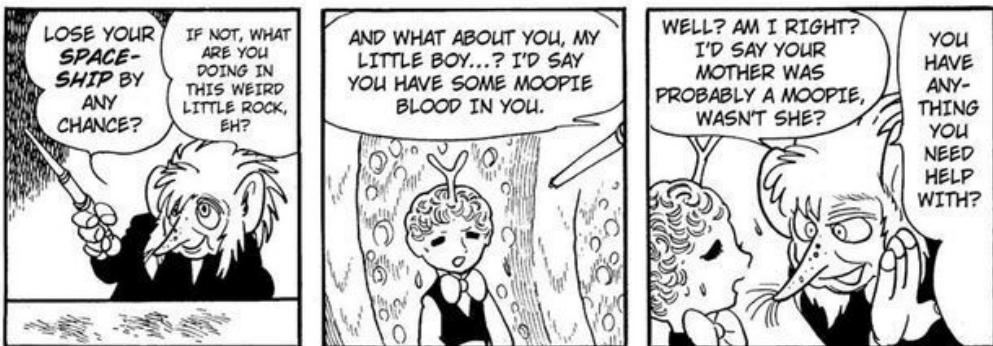


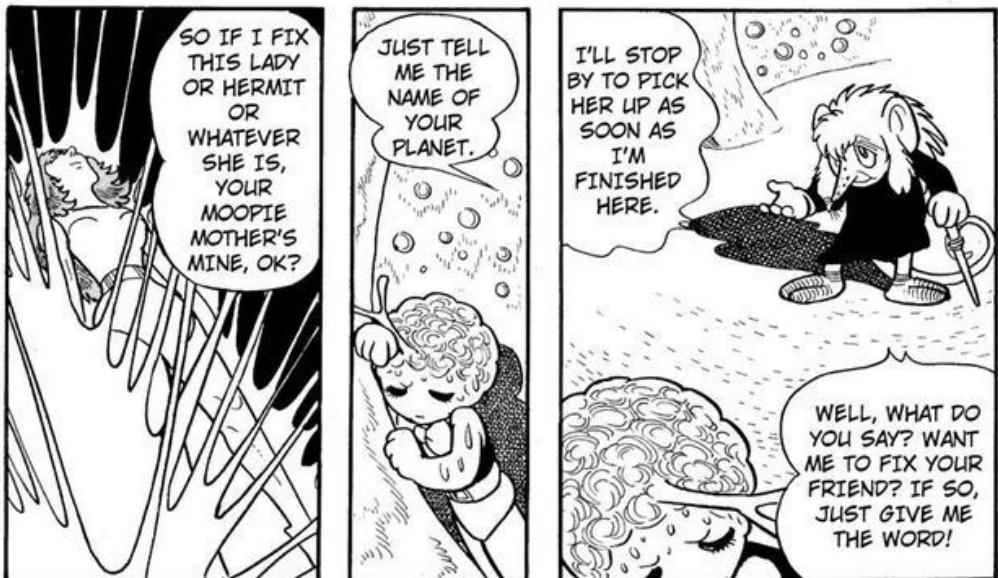
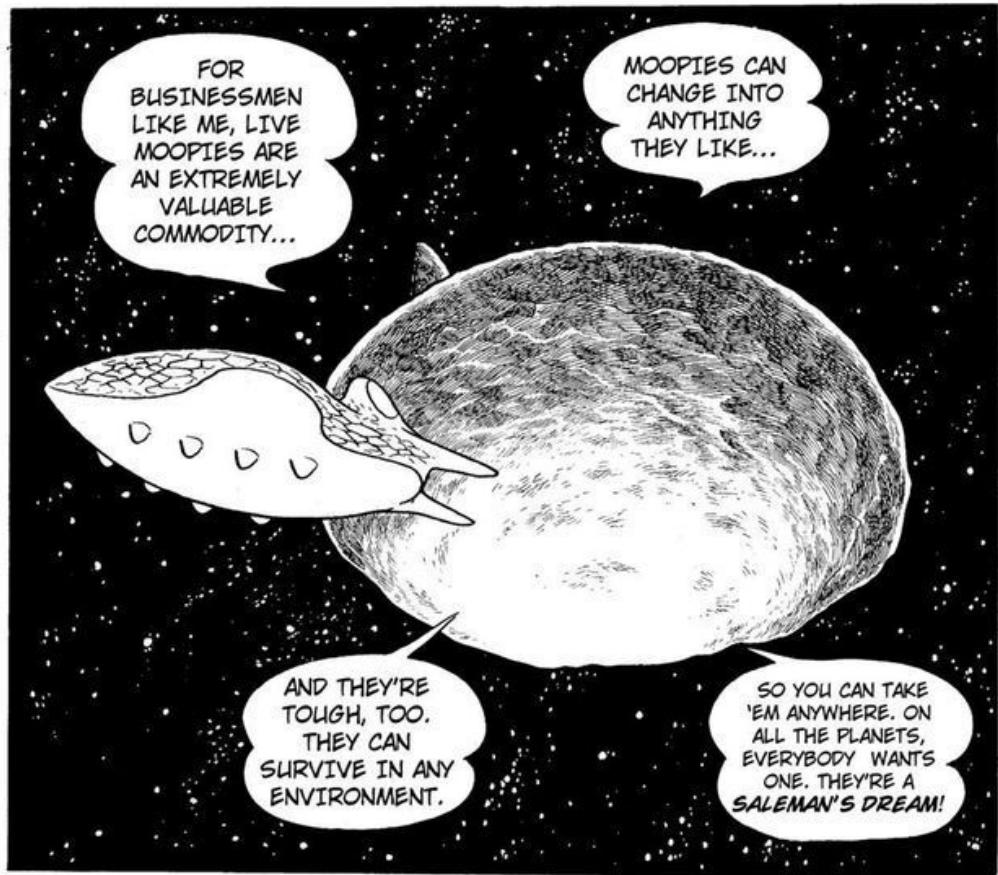
HEY?! WHAT'S
GOING ON?! THIS
IS THE MILKY WAY!
THE STAR CLUSTERS
AND GASEOUS
NEBULAE ARE JUST
THE WAY I
REMEMBER 'EM!



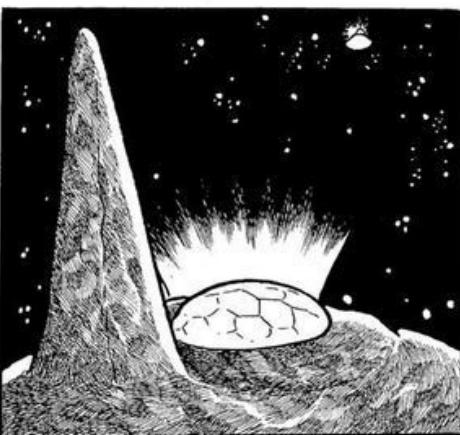
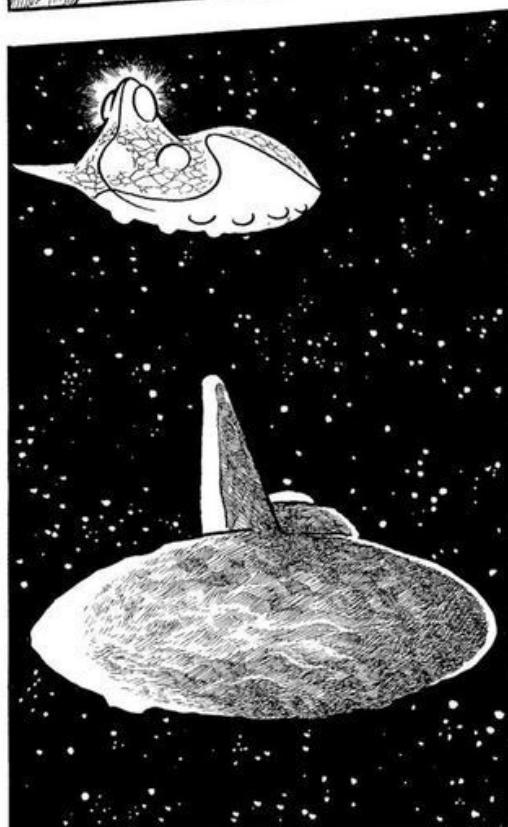


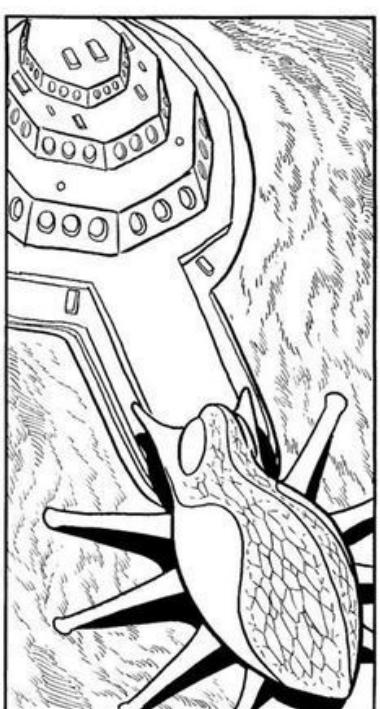
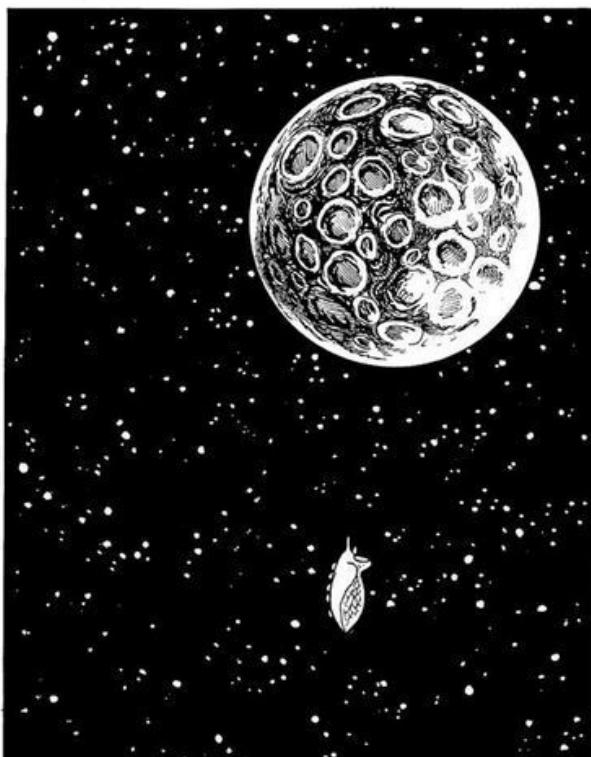


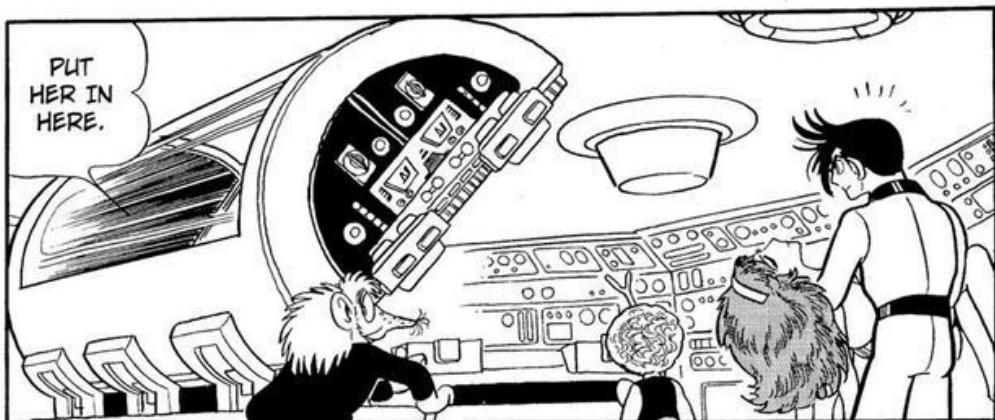
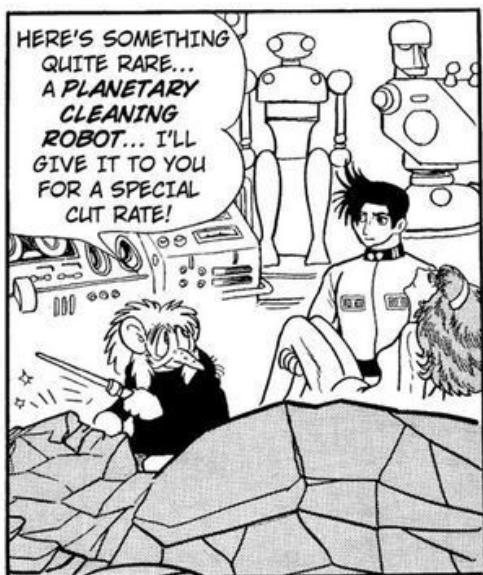
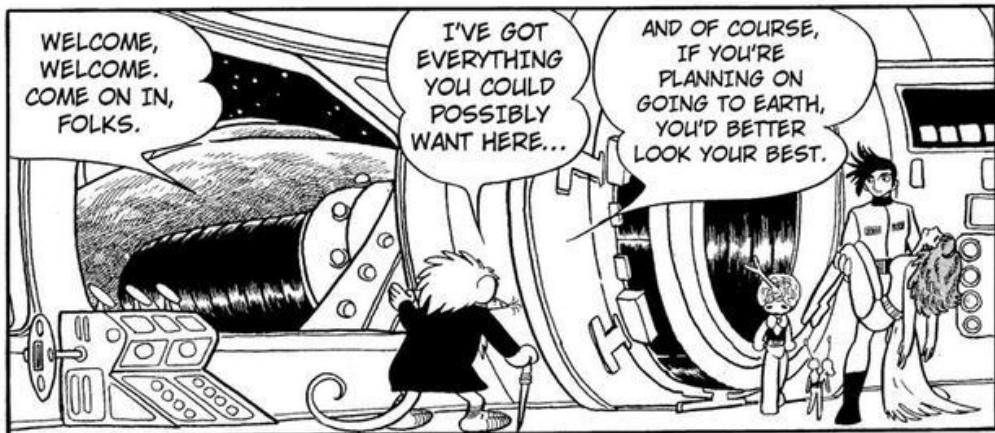


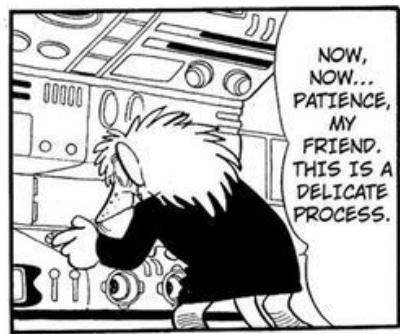
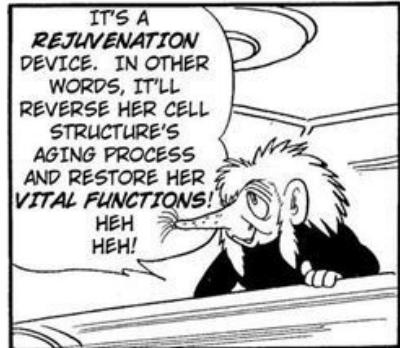
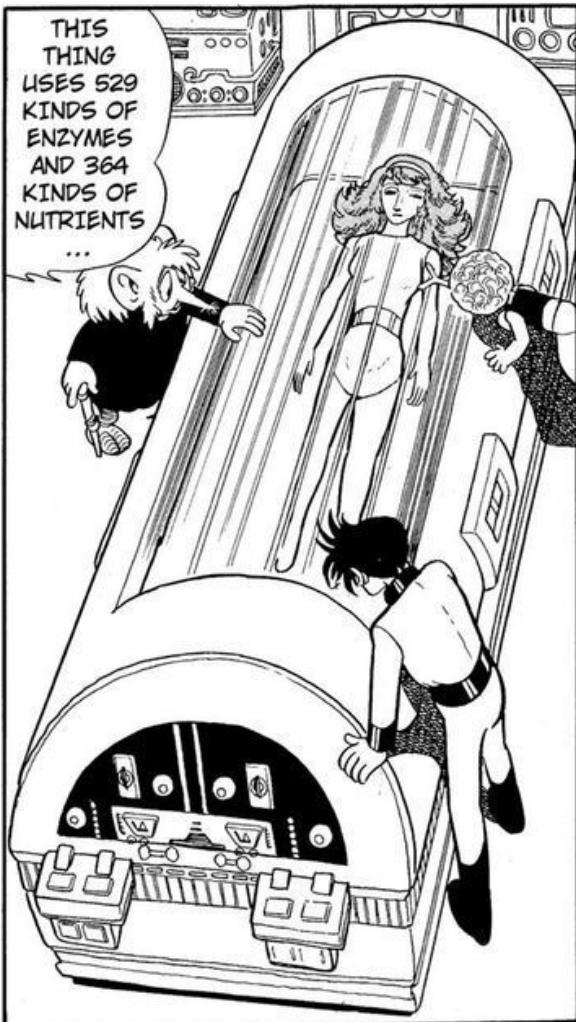




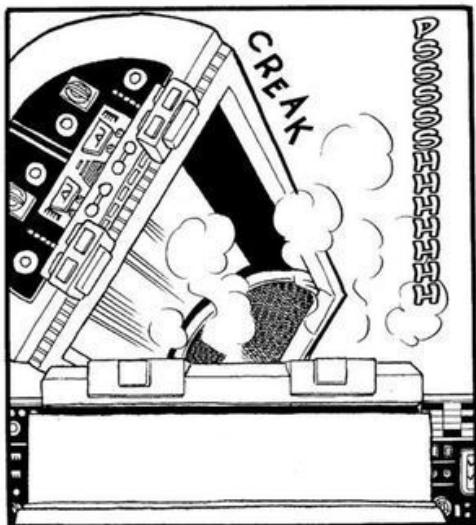
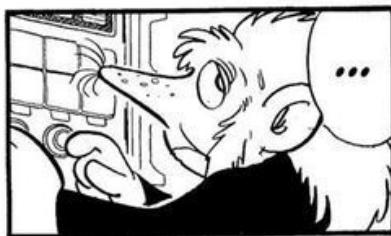


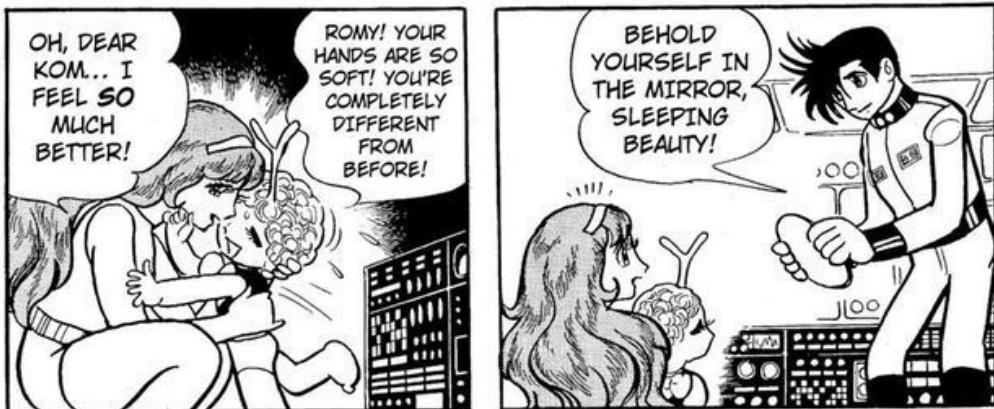
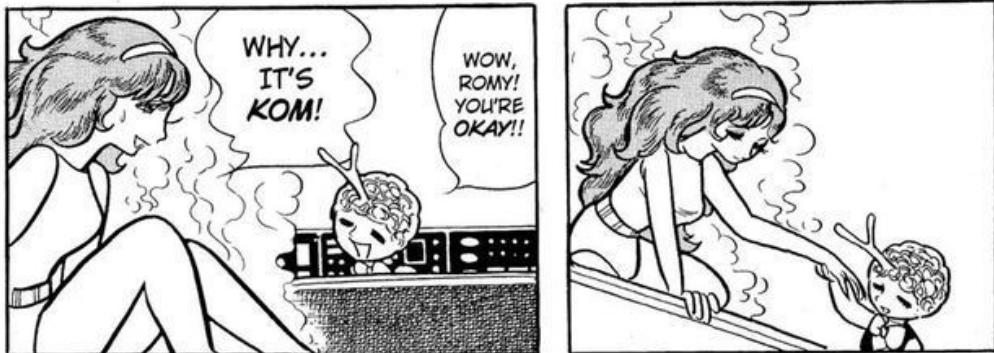


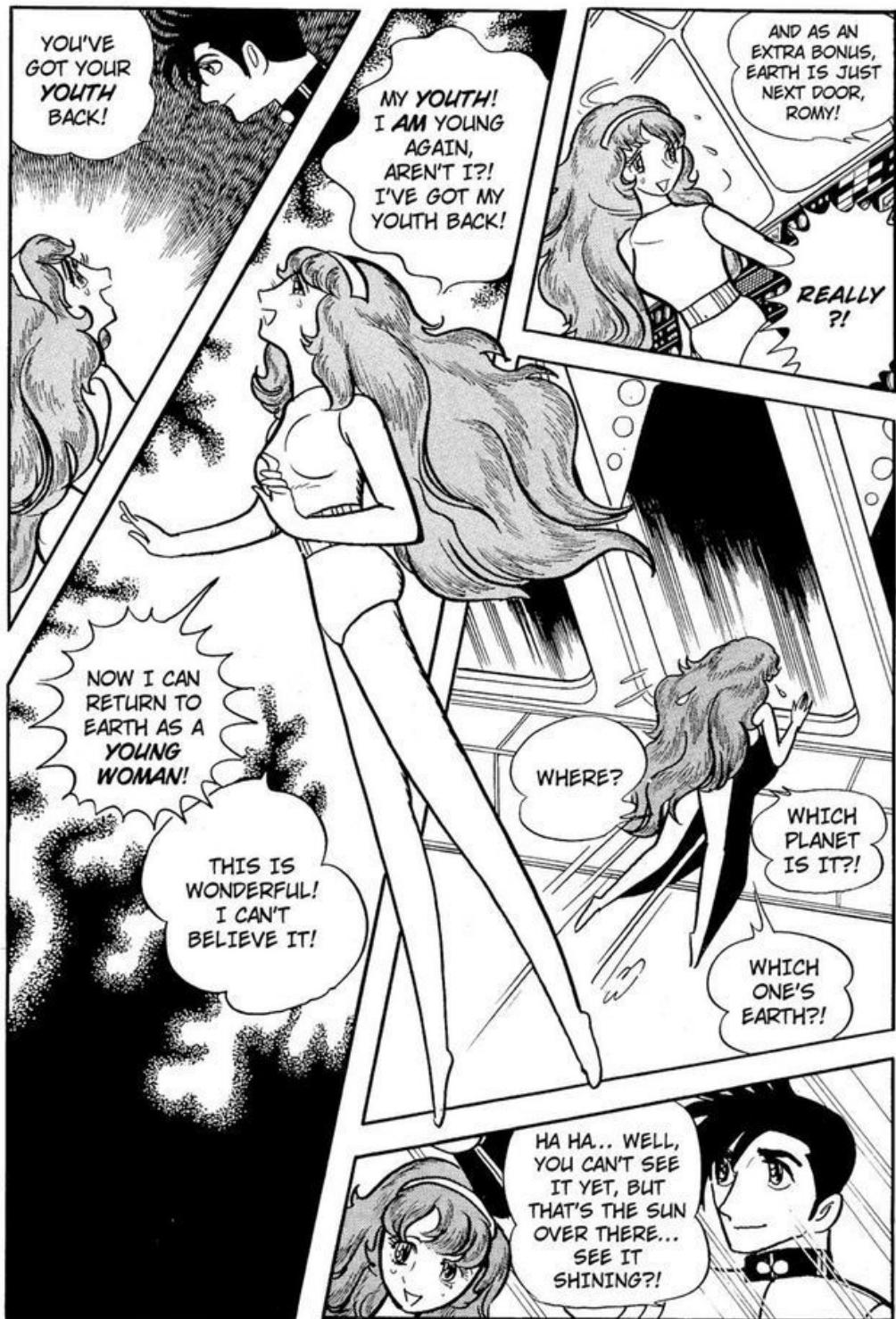




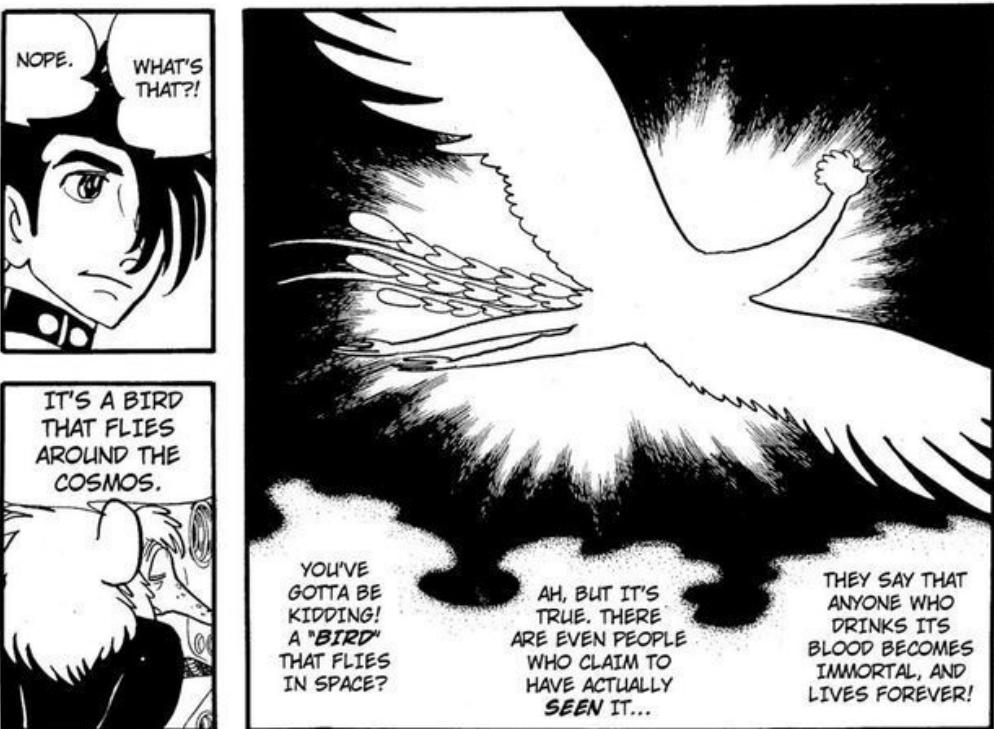


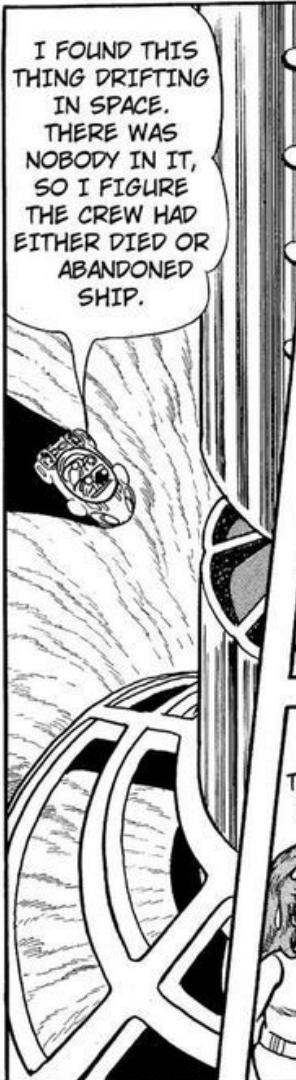


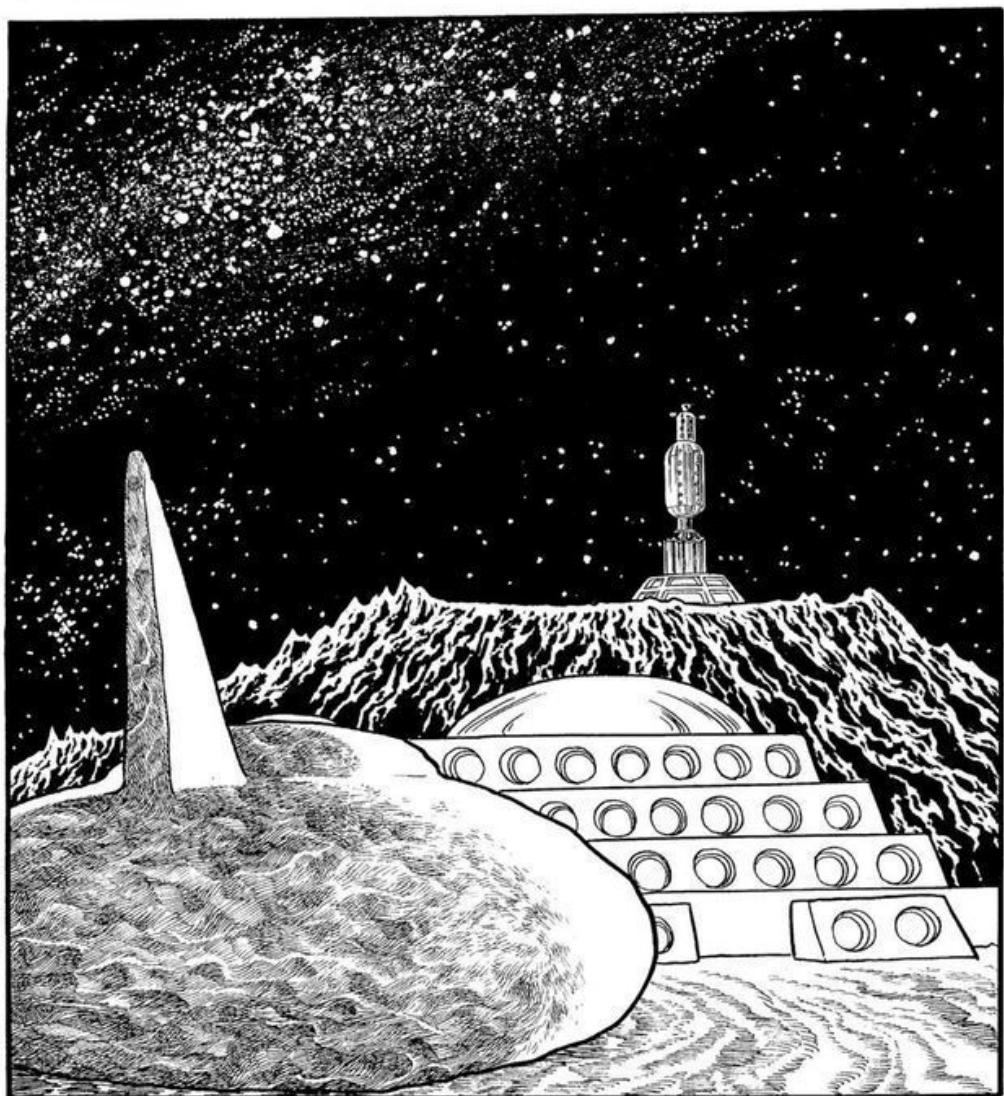
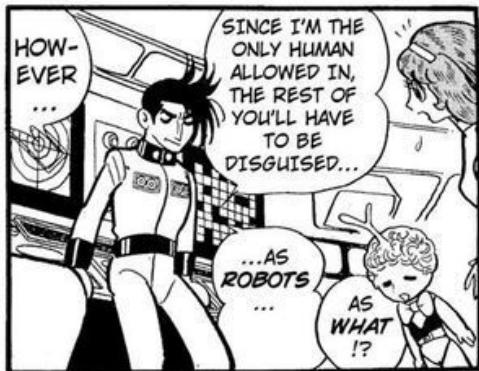




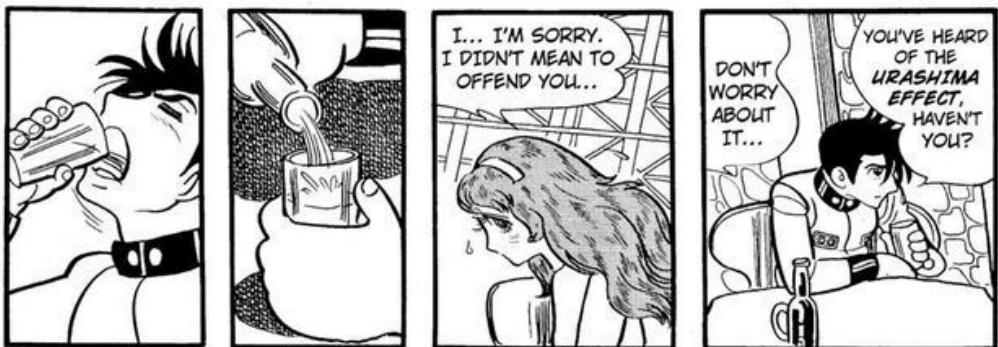
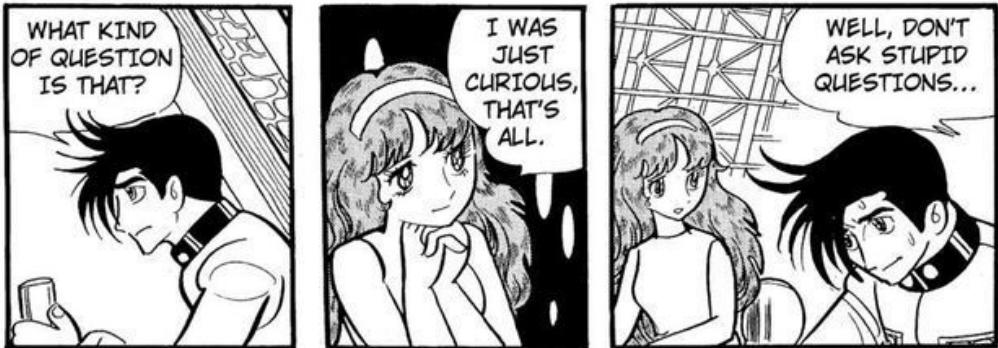






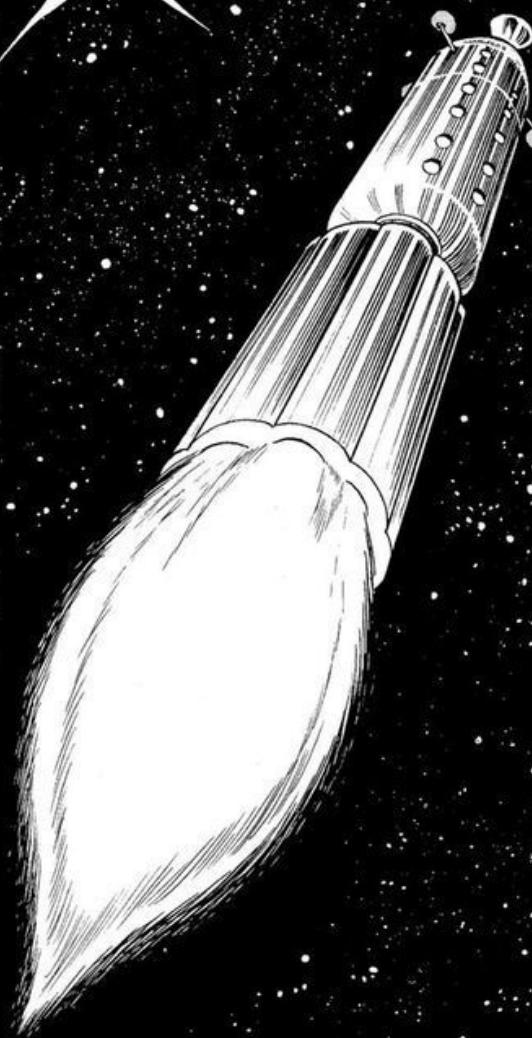


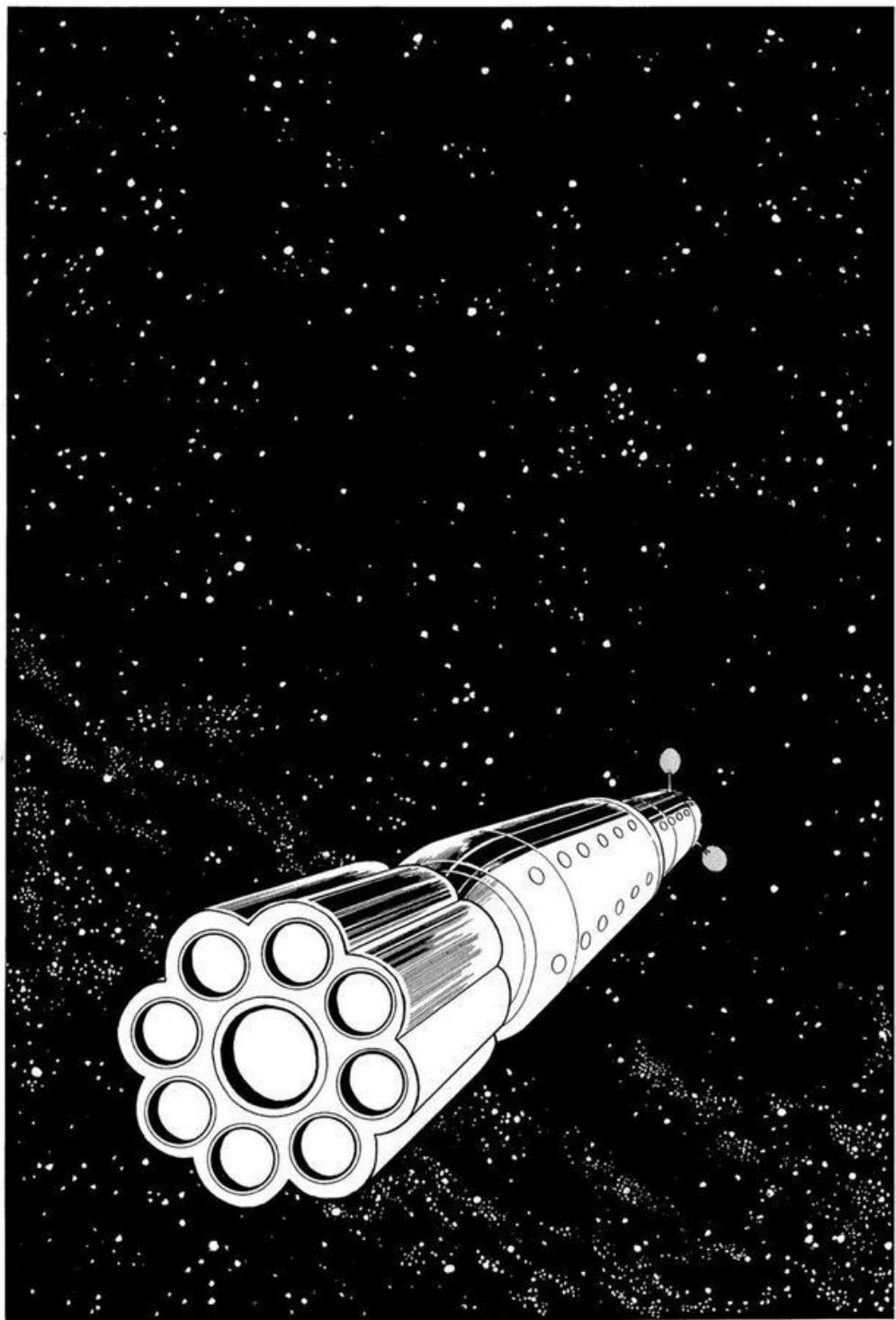


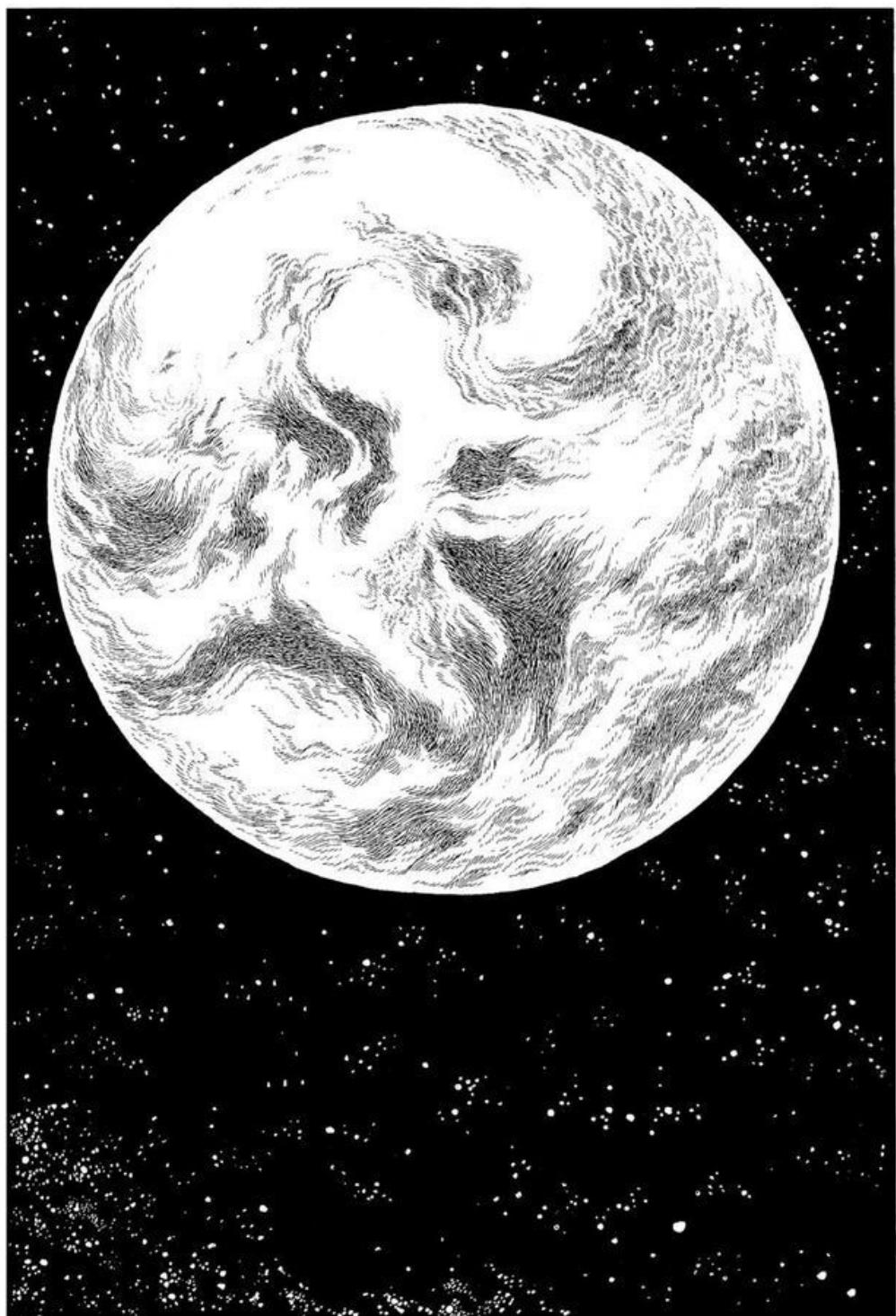


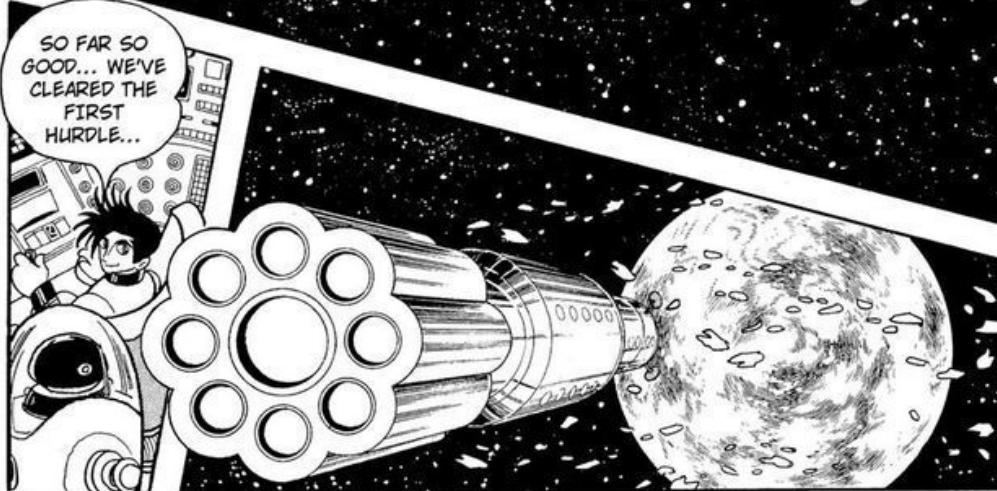
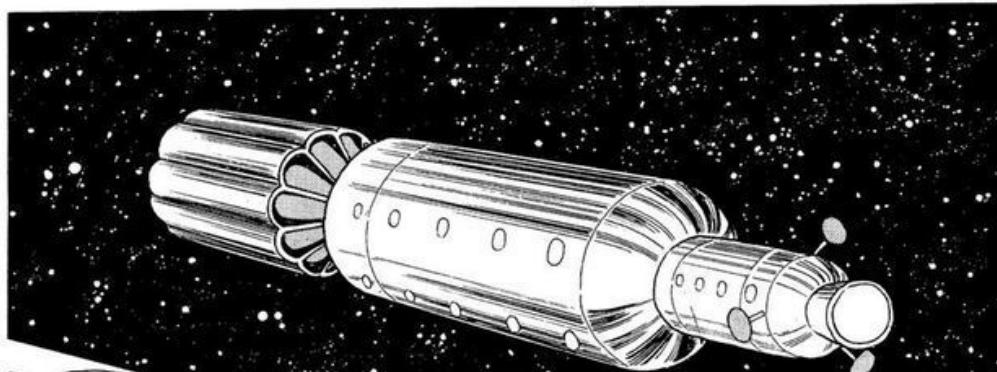
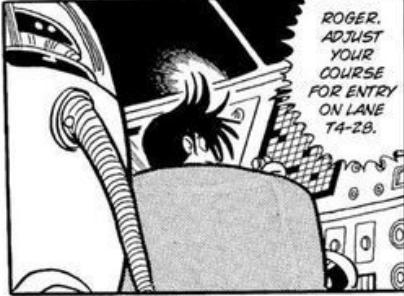
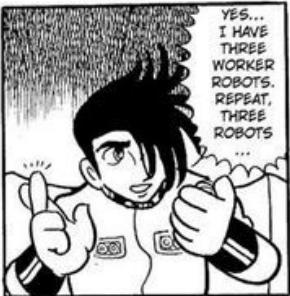
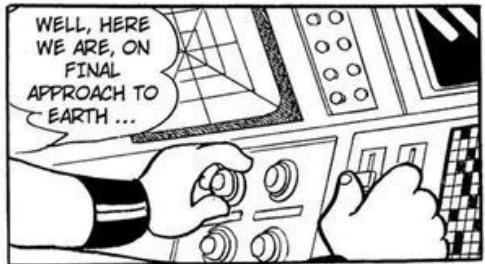


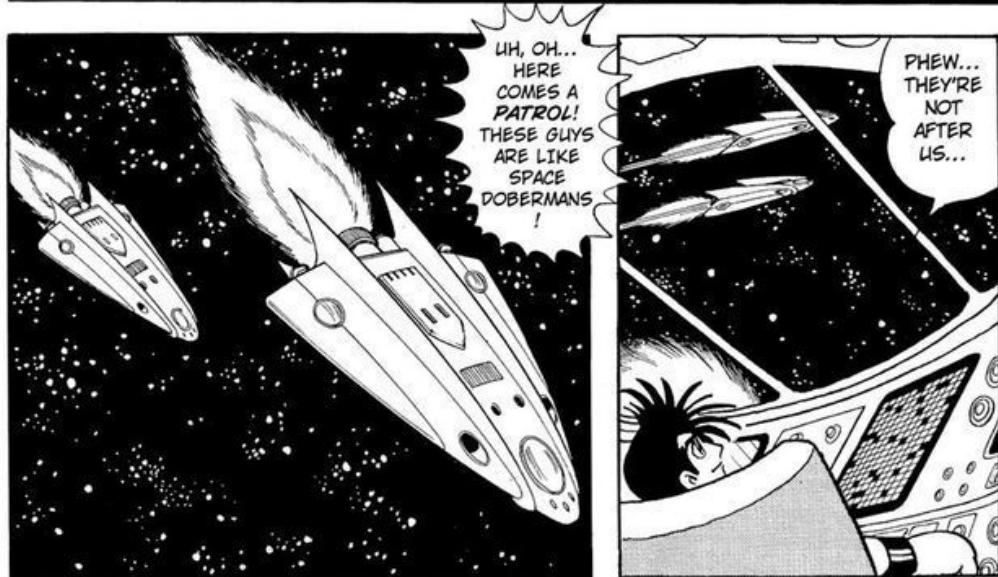
THE NEXT MORNING, MAKIMURA TOOK OFF IN HIS NEW SPACESHIP, THIS TIME HEADED FOR THE REAL EARTH. THE CREW ALSO INCLUDED WHAT APPEARED TO BE THREE ROBOTS...

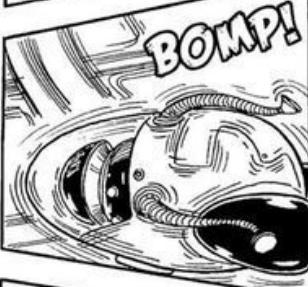
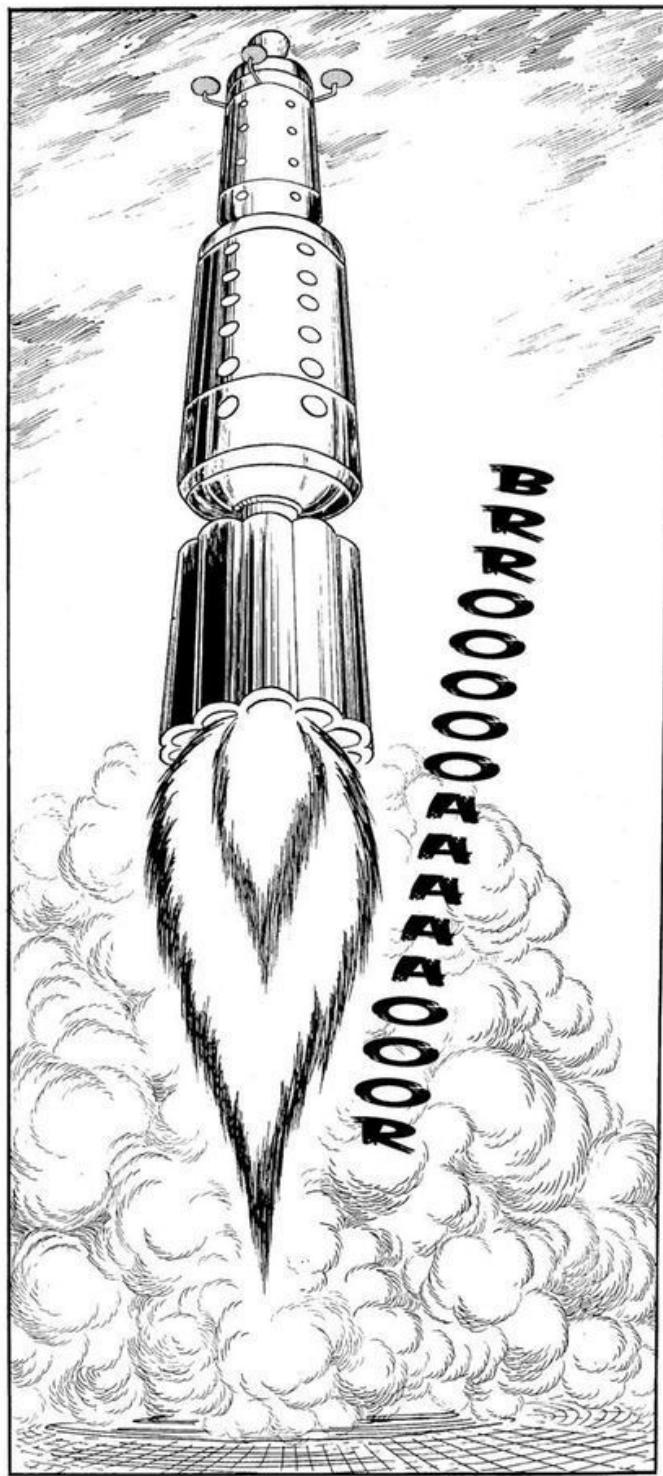


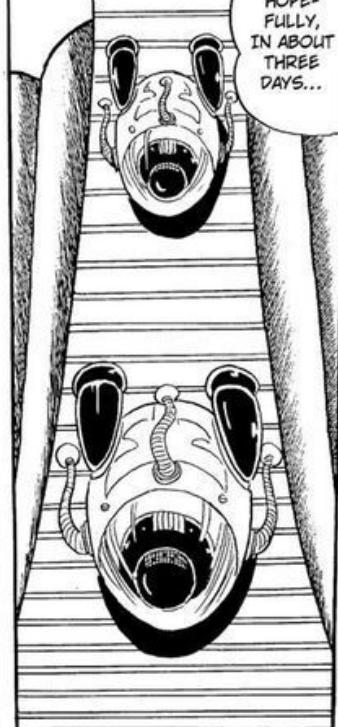
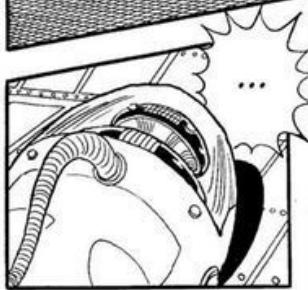
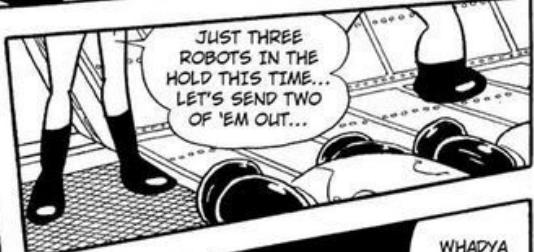
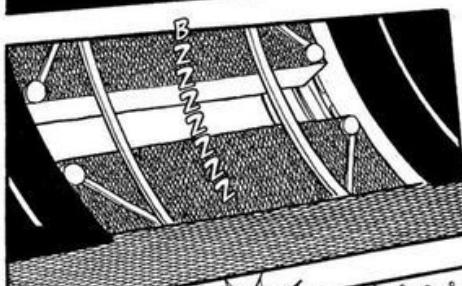
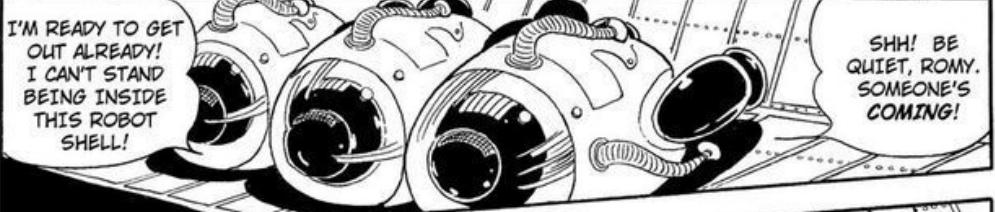


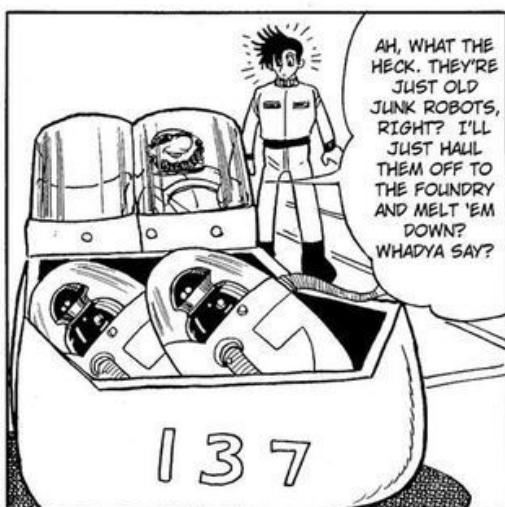
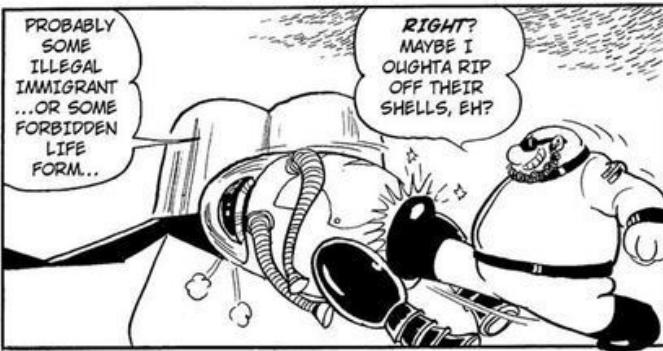
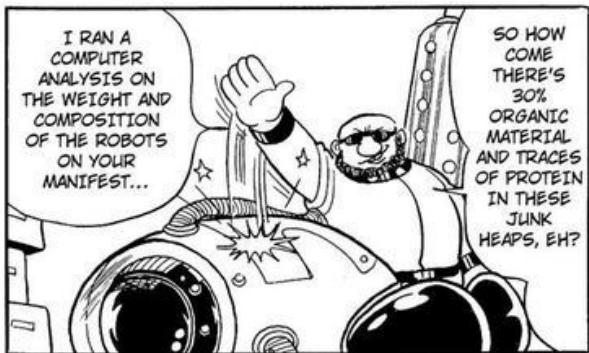


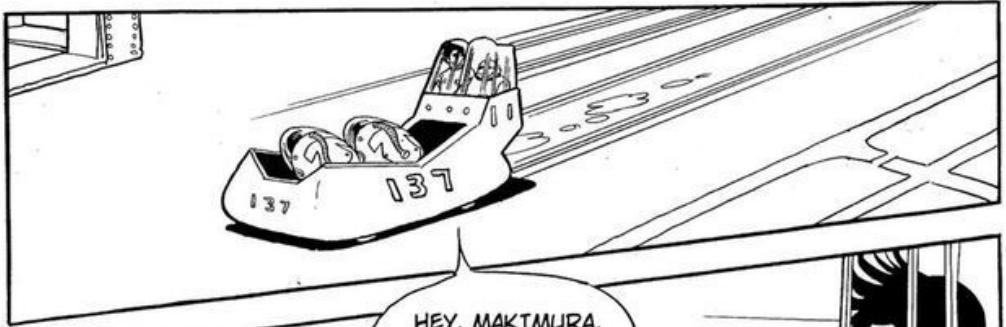


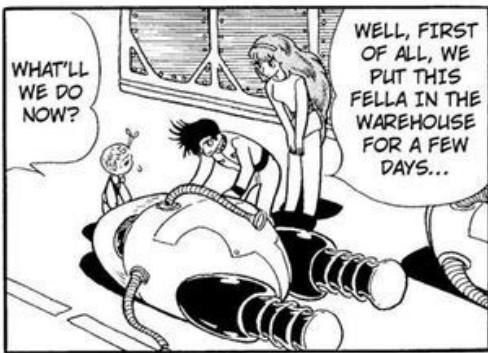
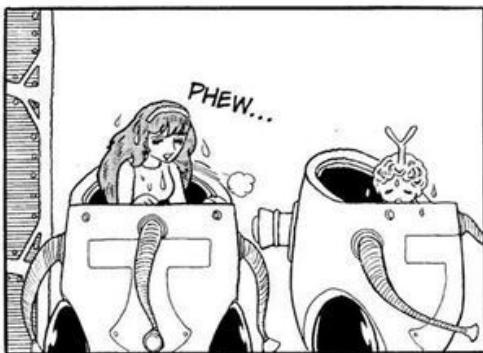
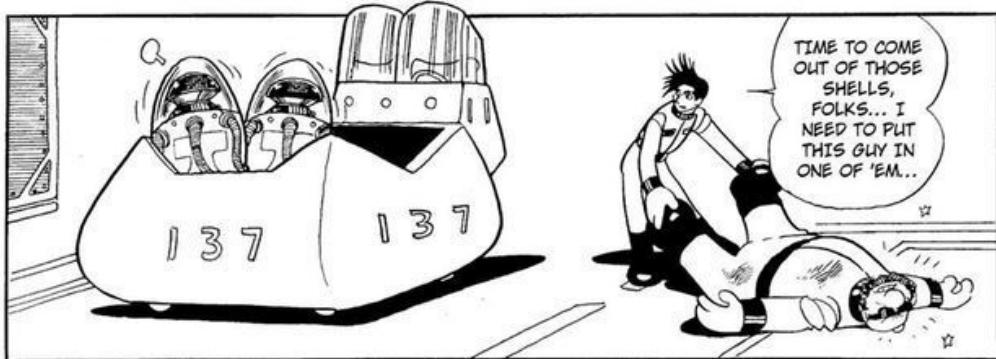


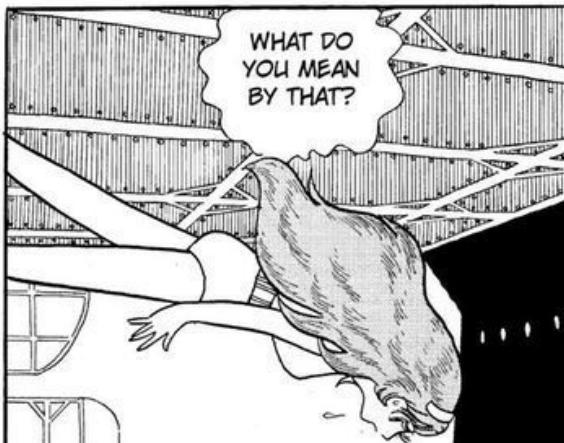


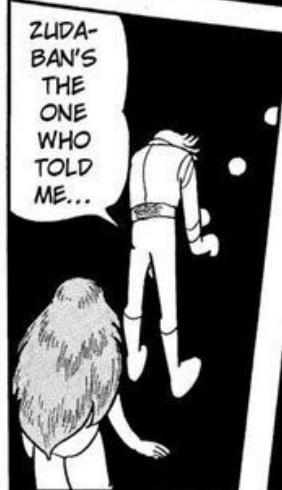
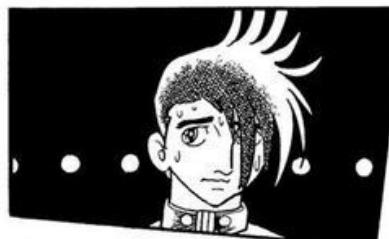




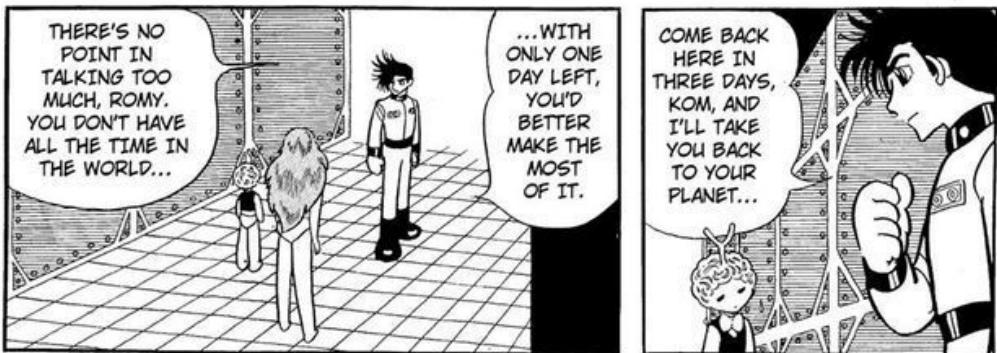


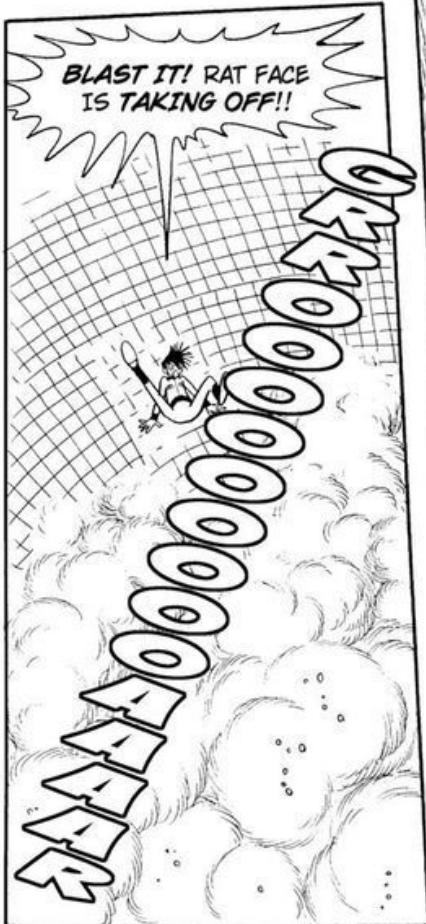
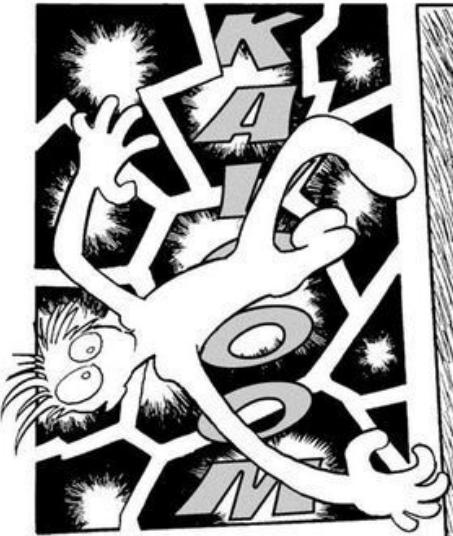


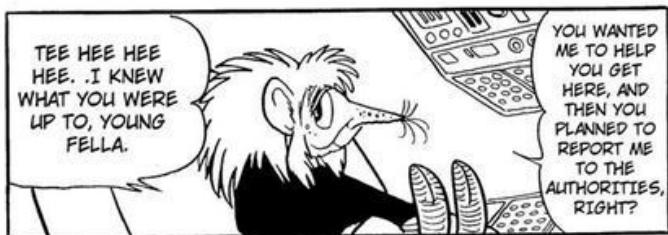
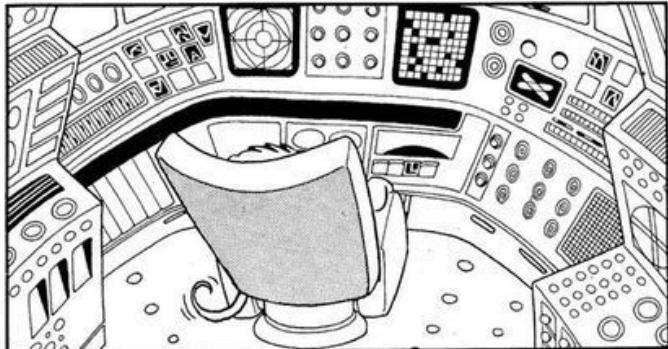


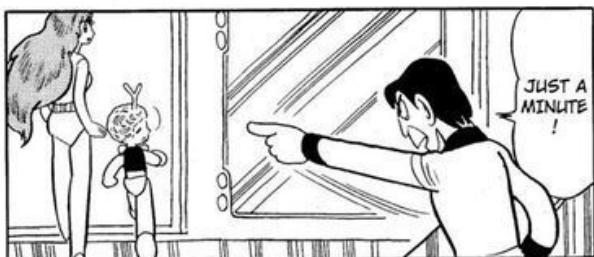
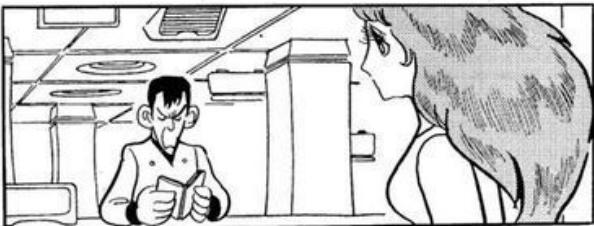
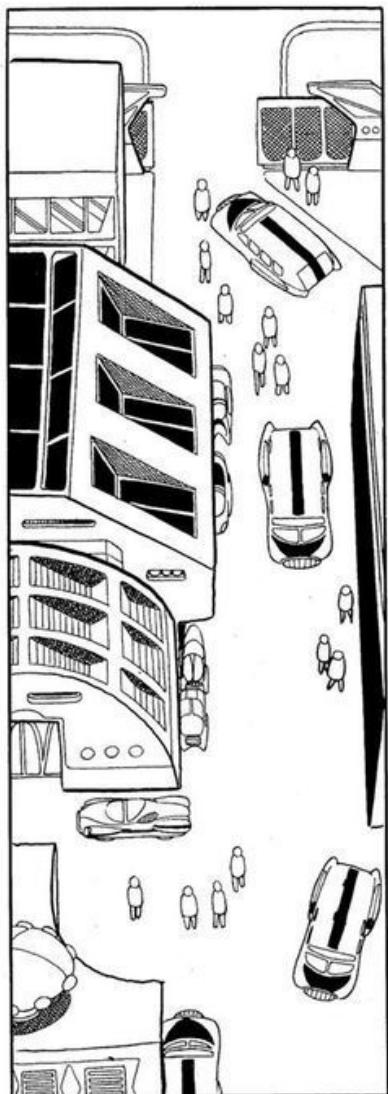
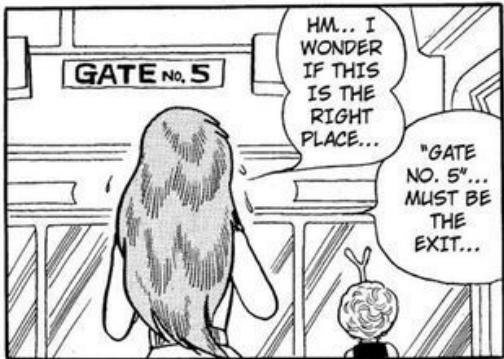
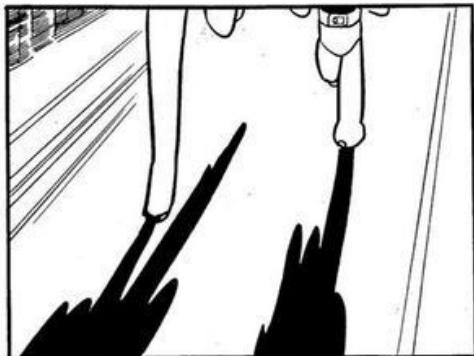


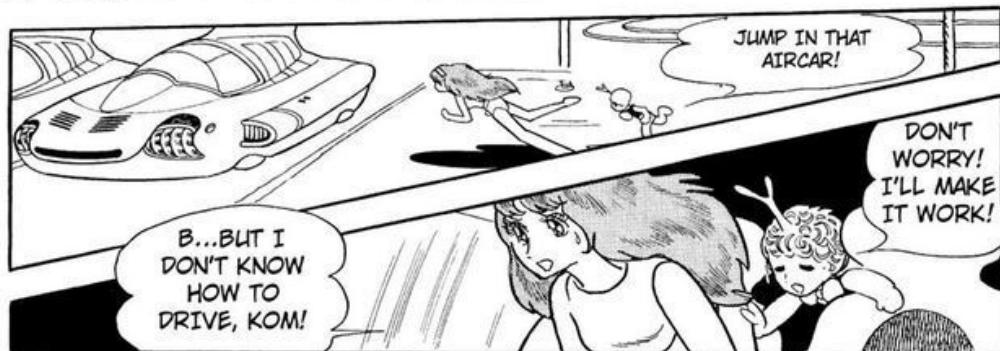
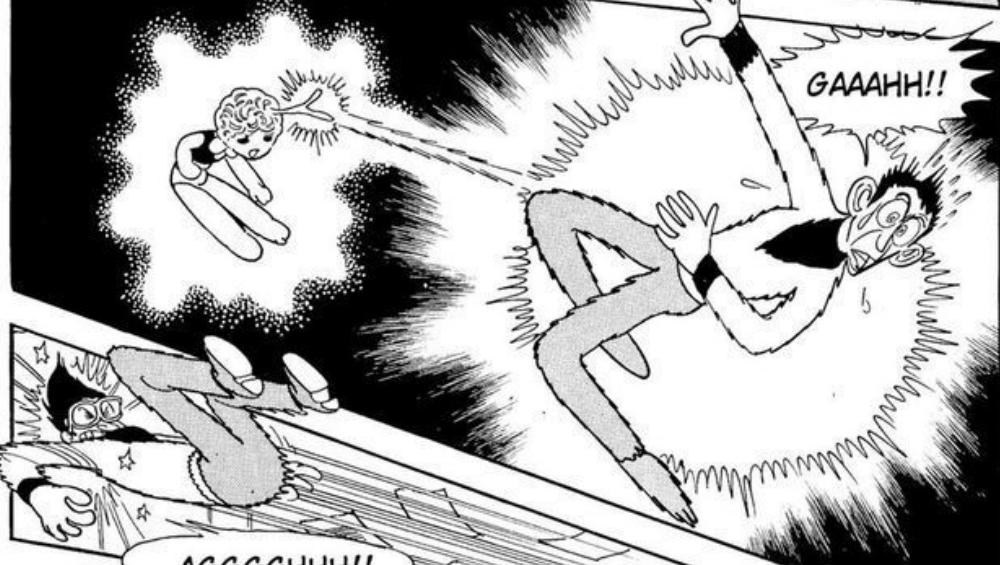


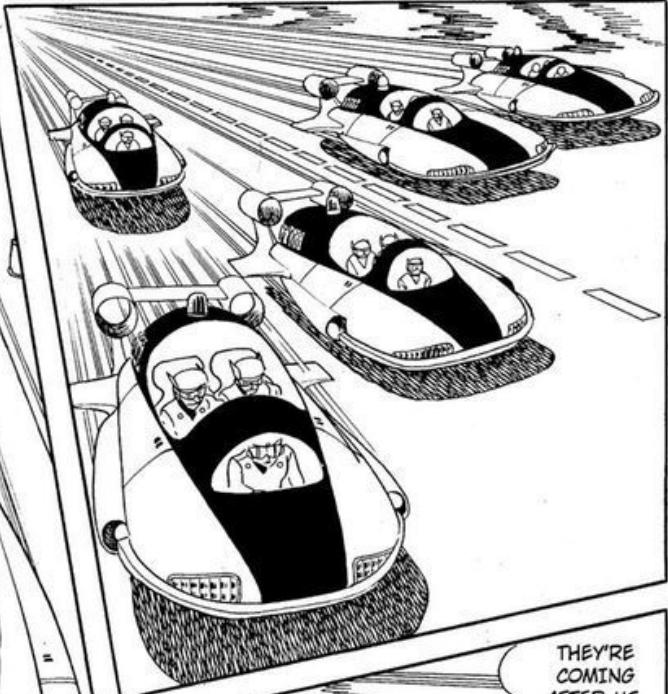
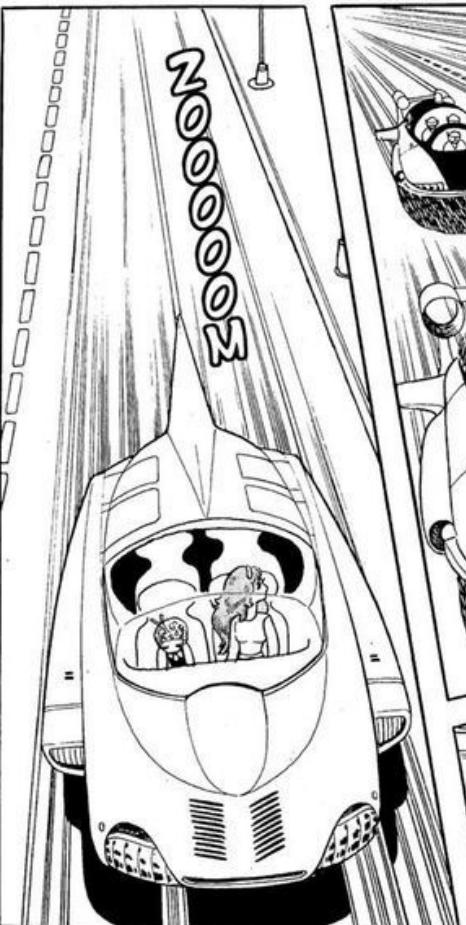
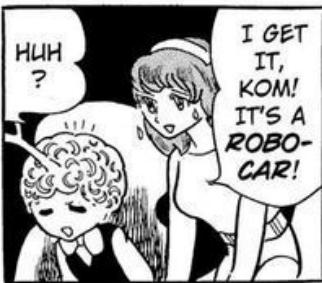


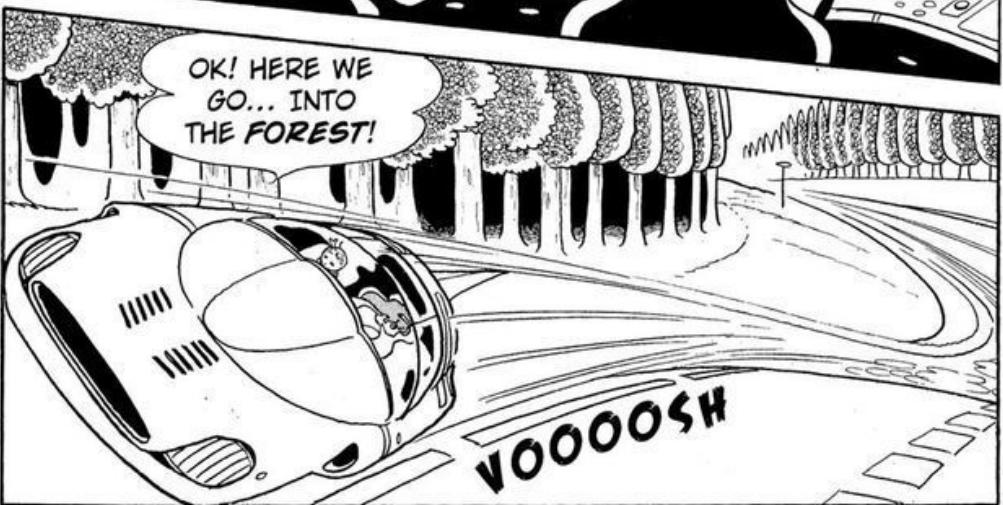
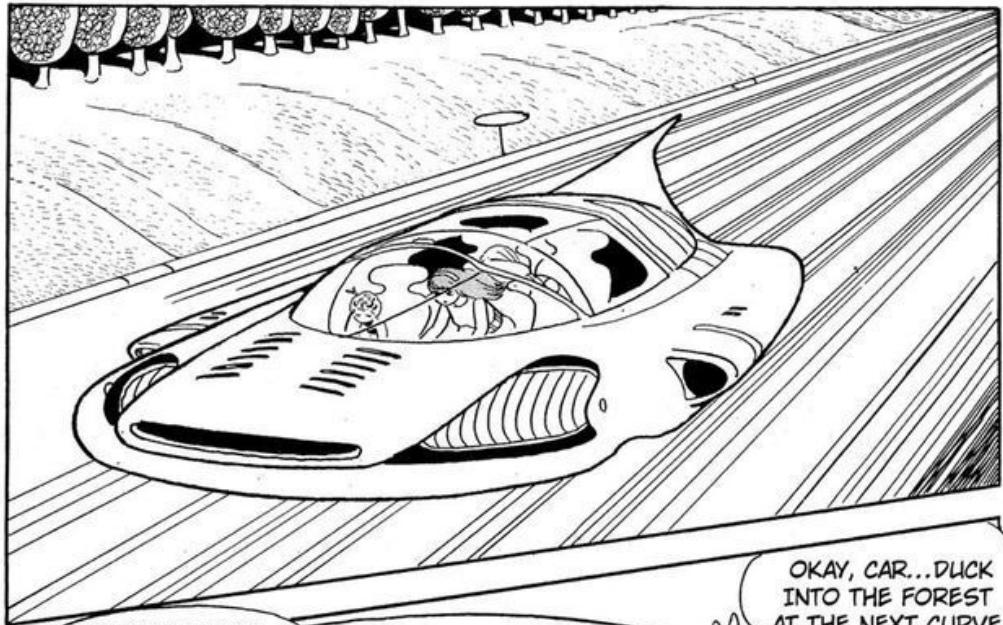


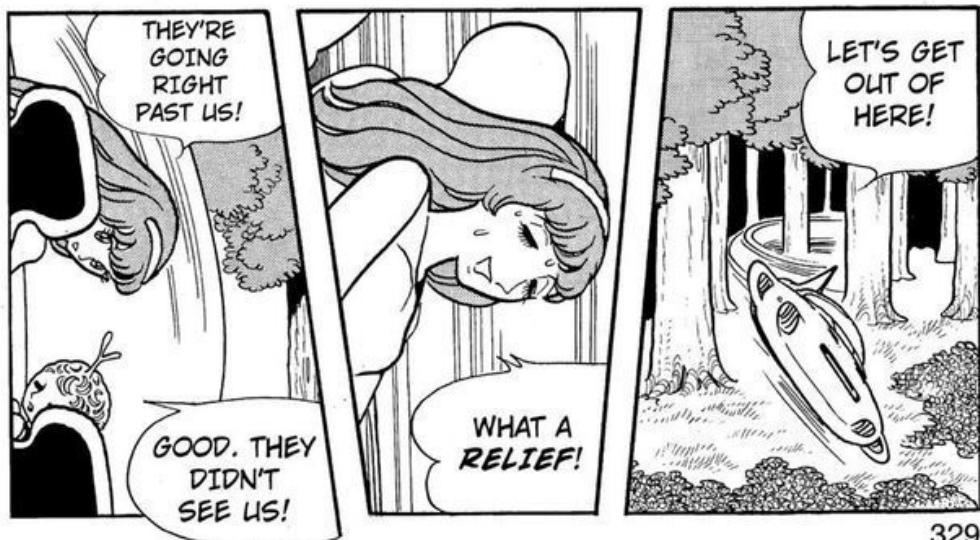
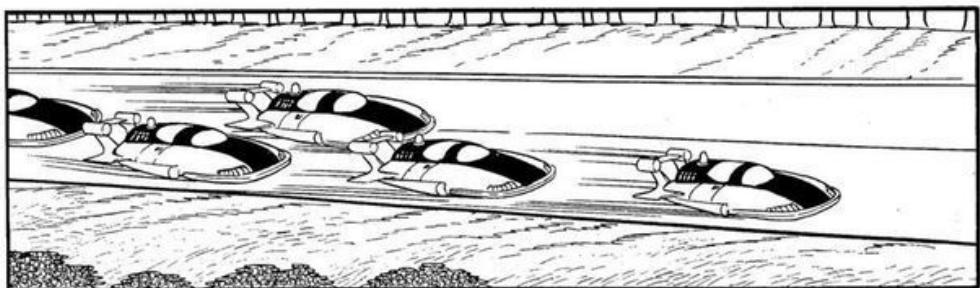
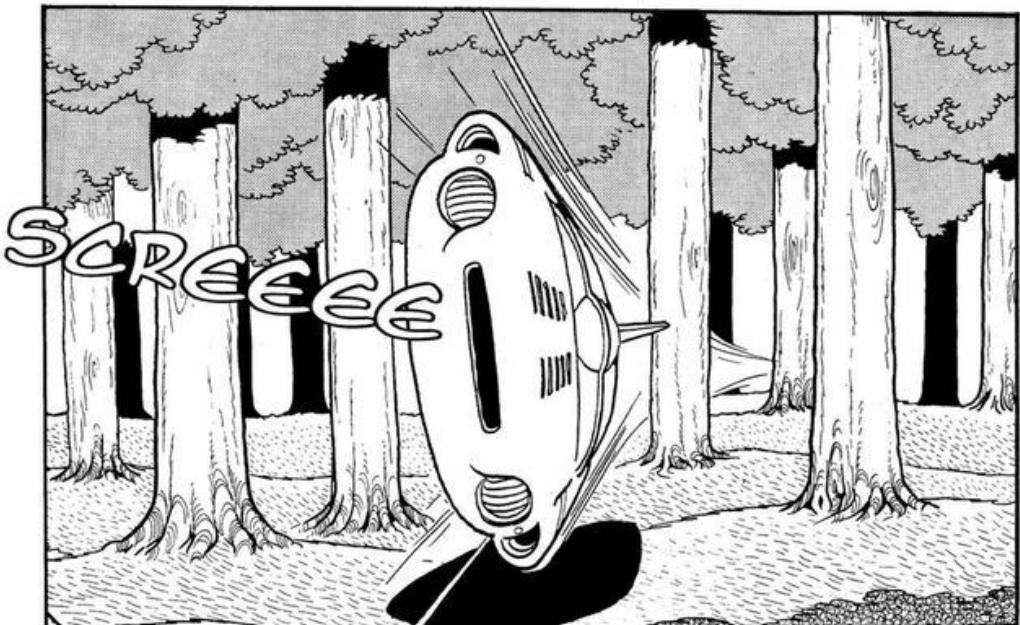


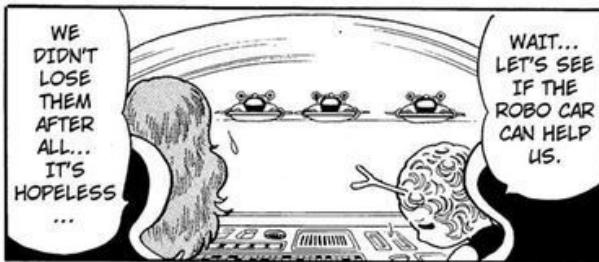
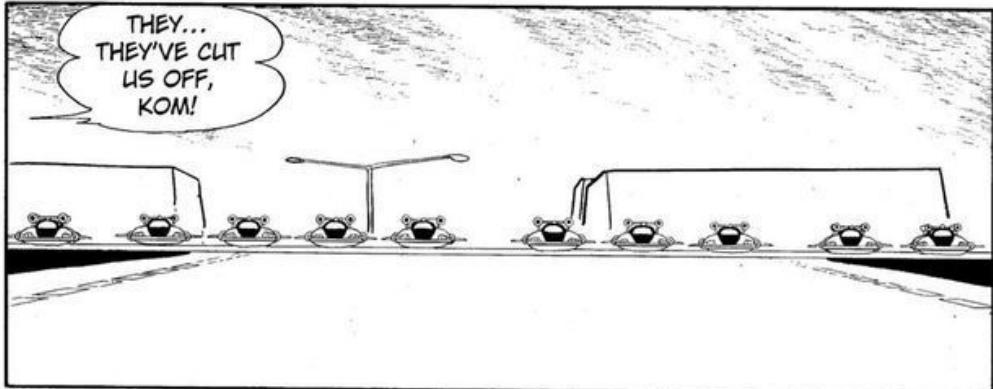
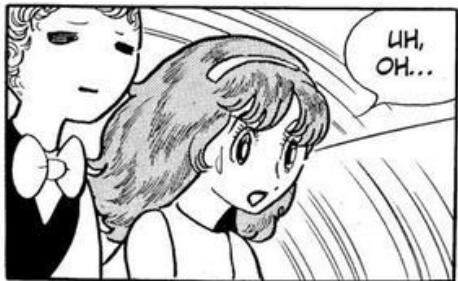








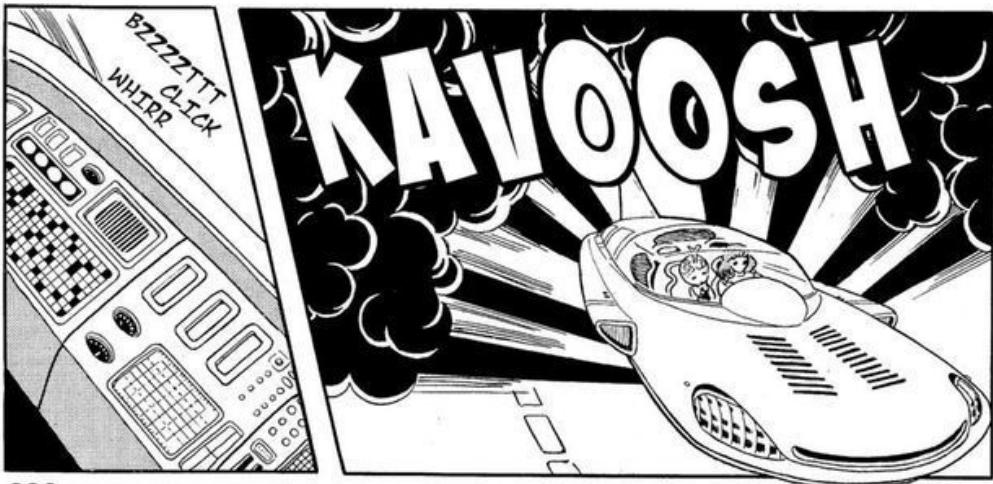


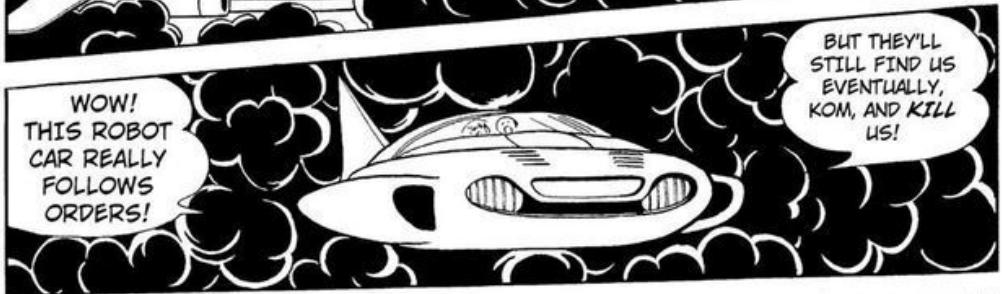


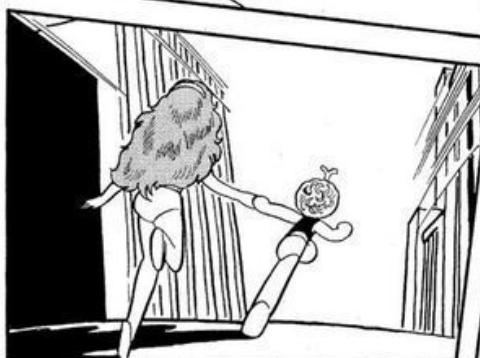
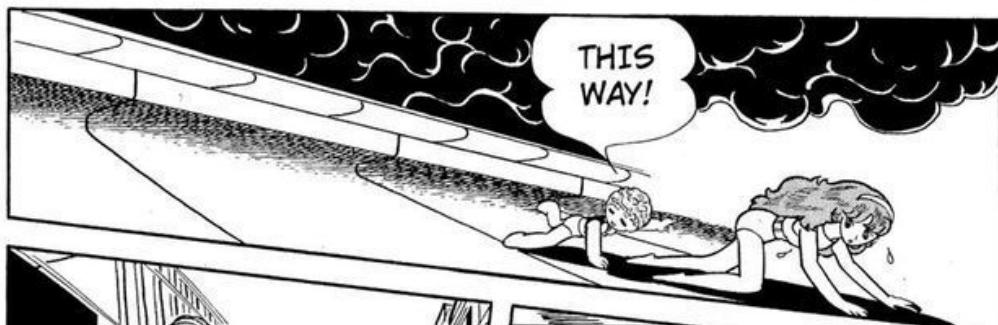
WAIT...
LET'S SEE
IF THE
ROBO CAR
CAN HELP
US.

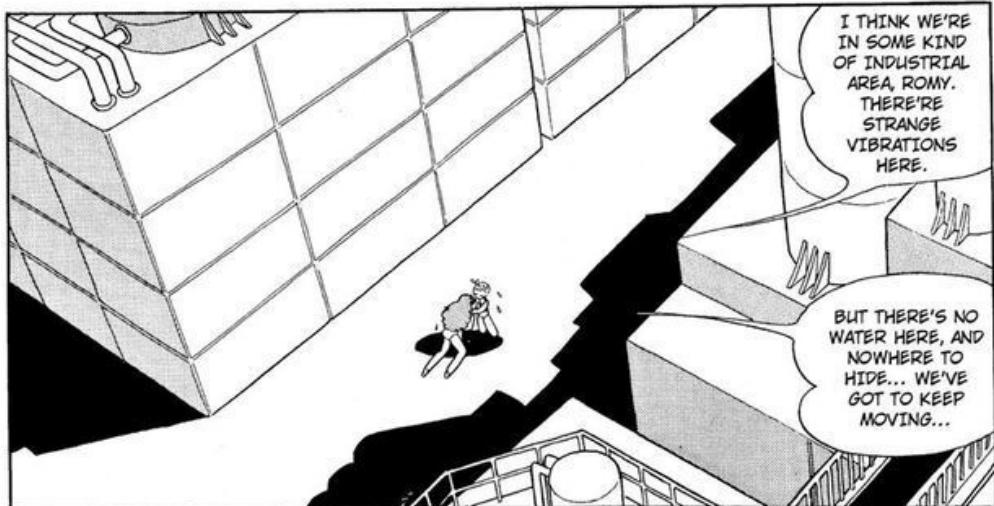


HURRY!
WE
NEED
TO
HIDE!







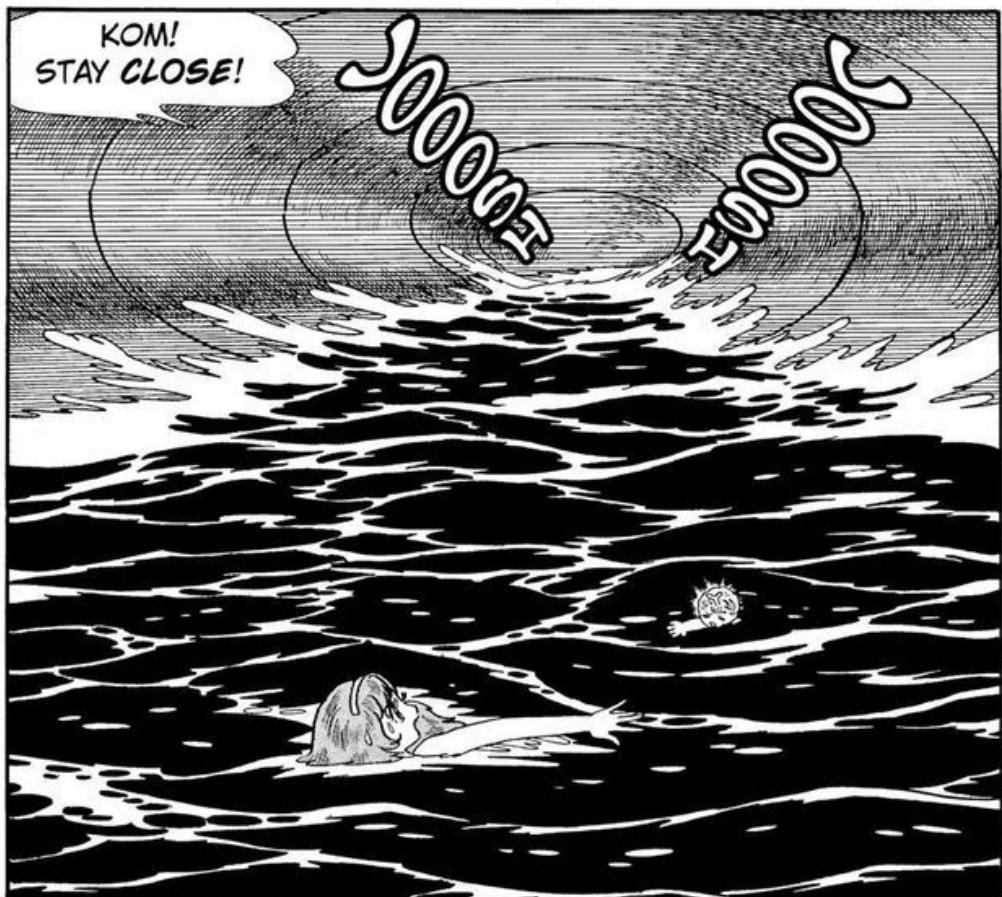


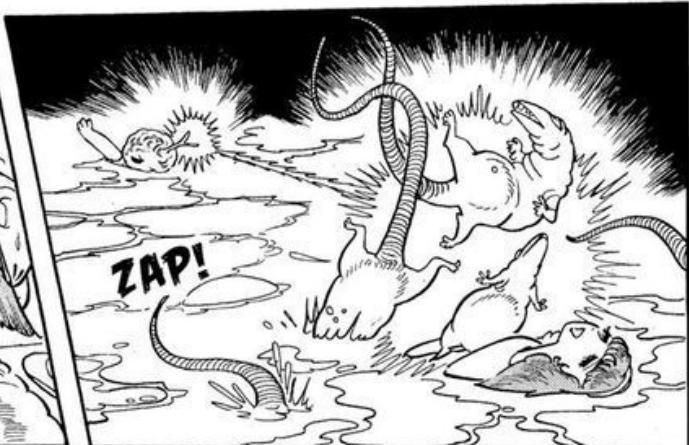
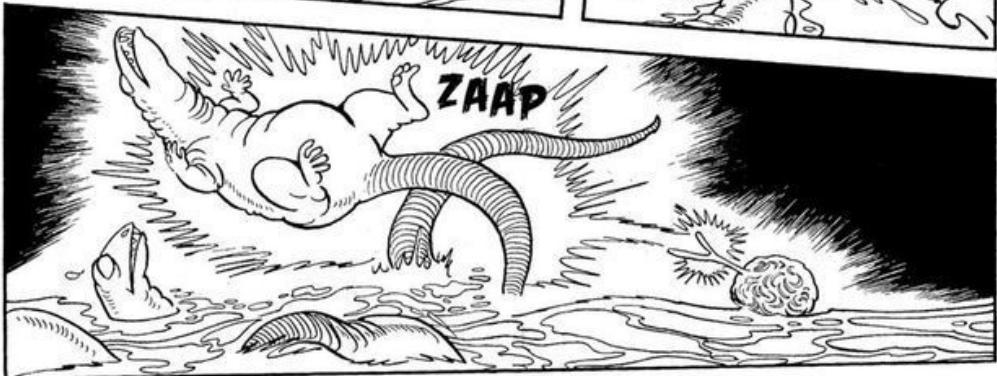
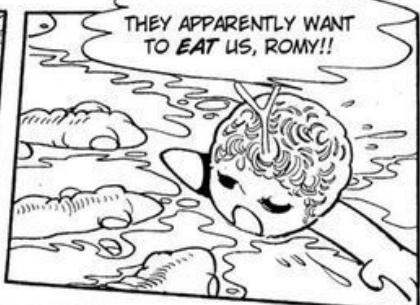
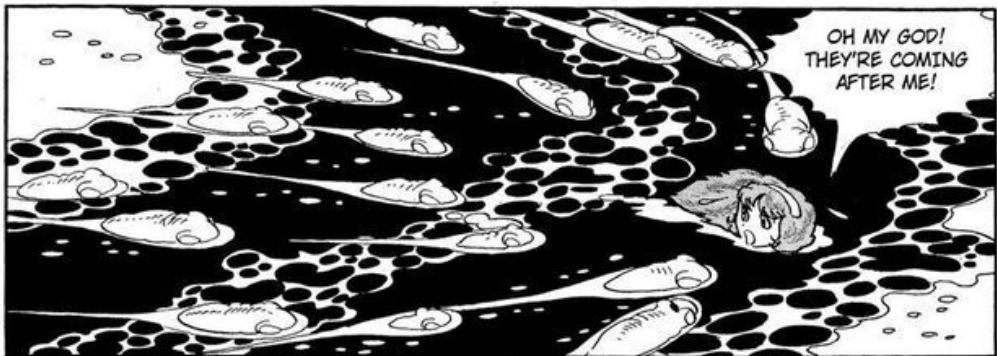


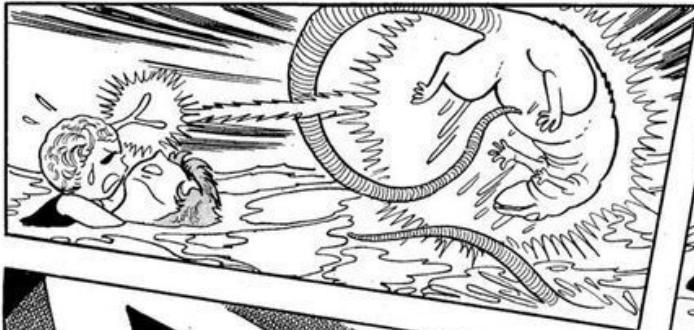
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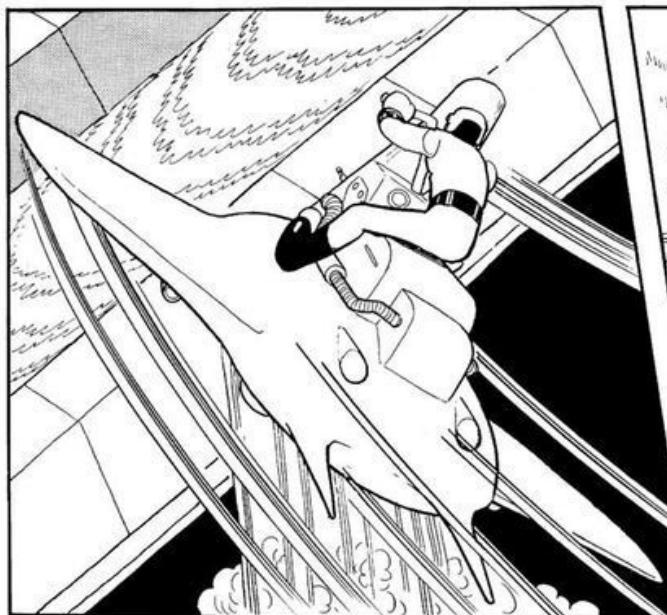
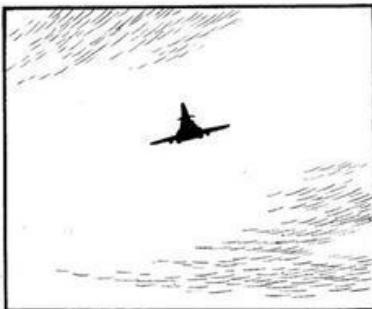
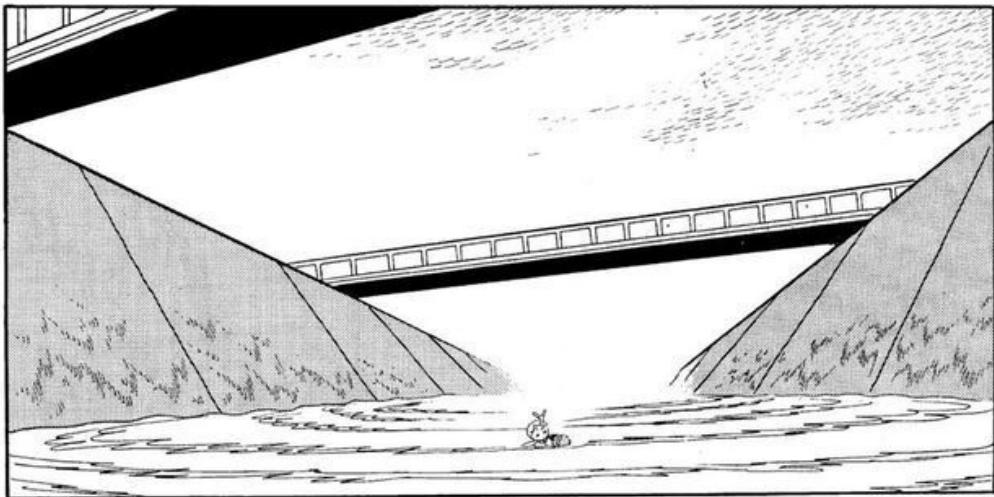


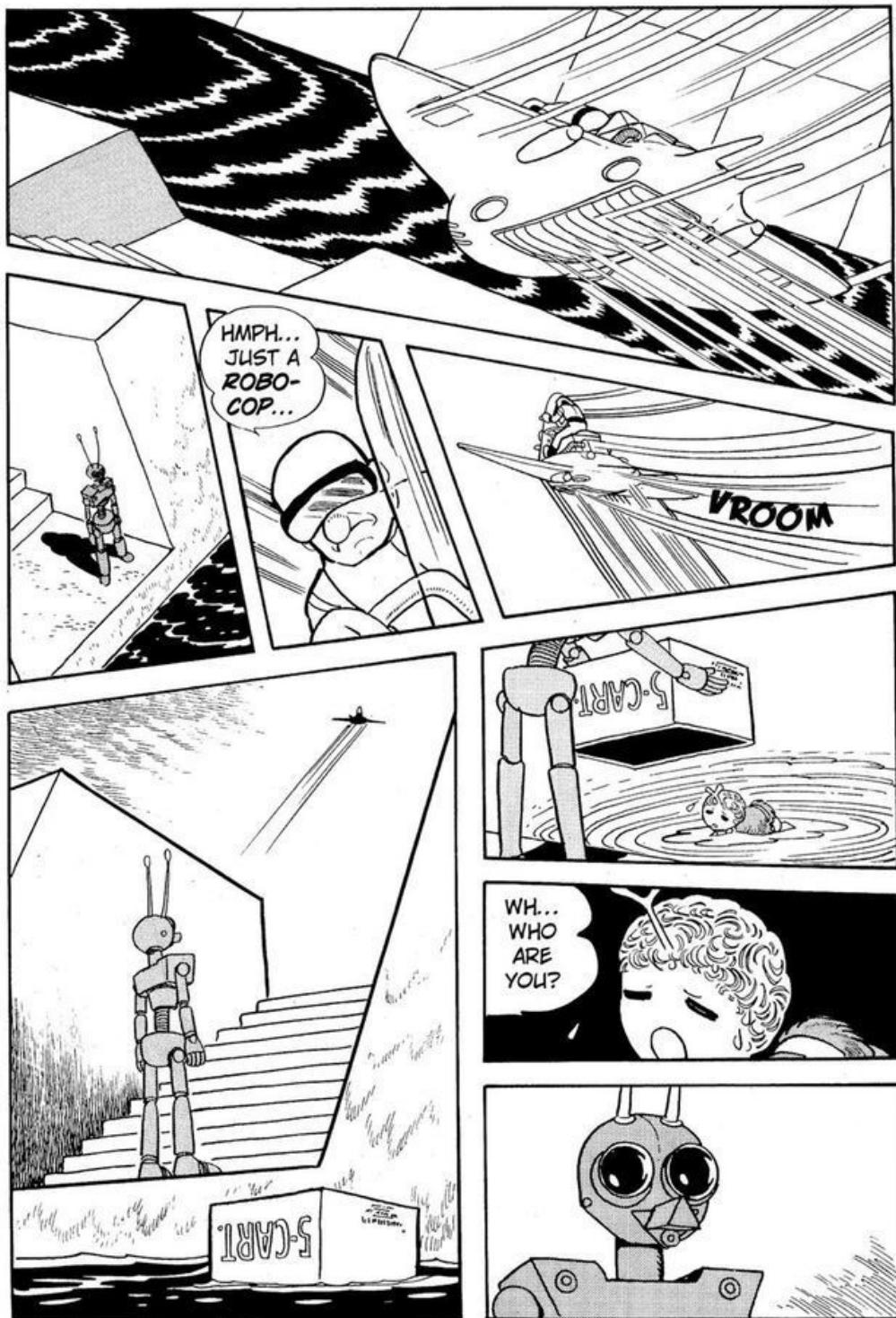
VOOSH

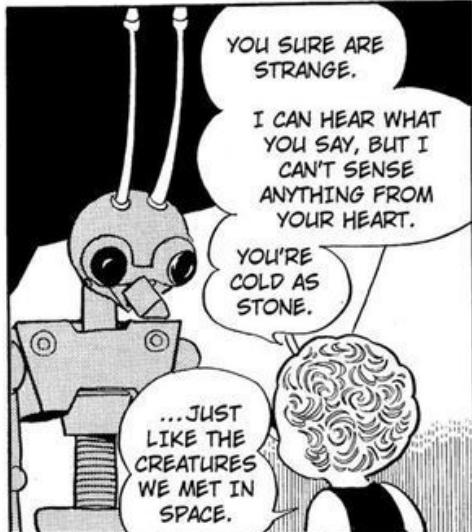
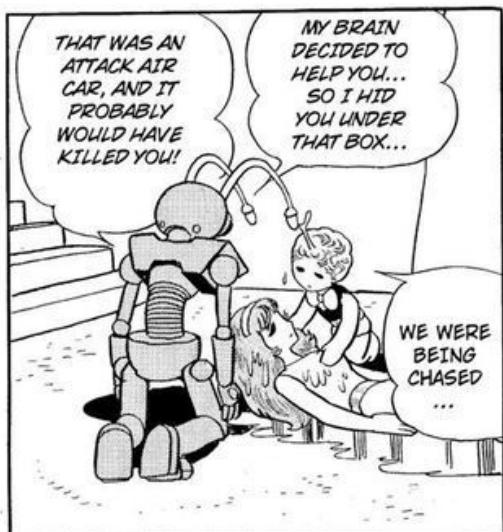
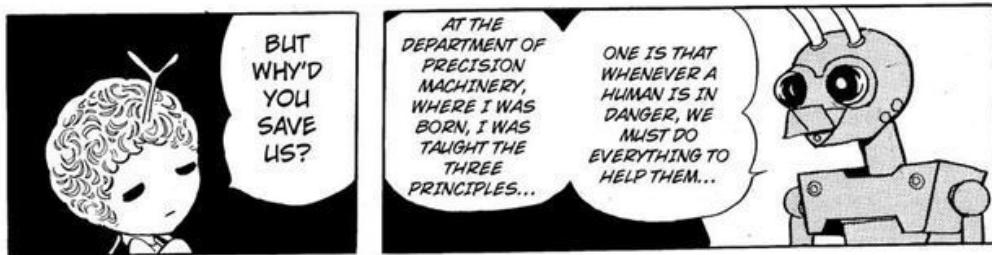
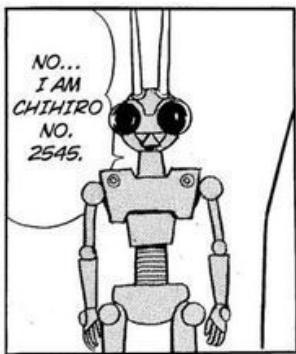
WHOOOSH

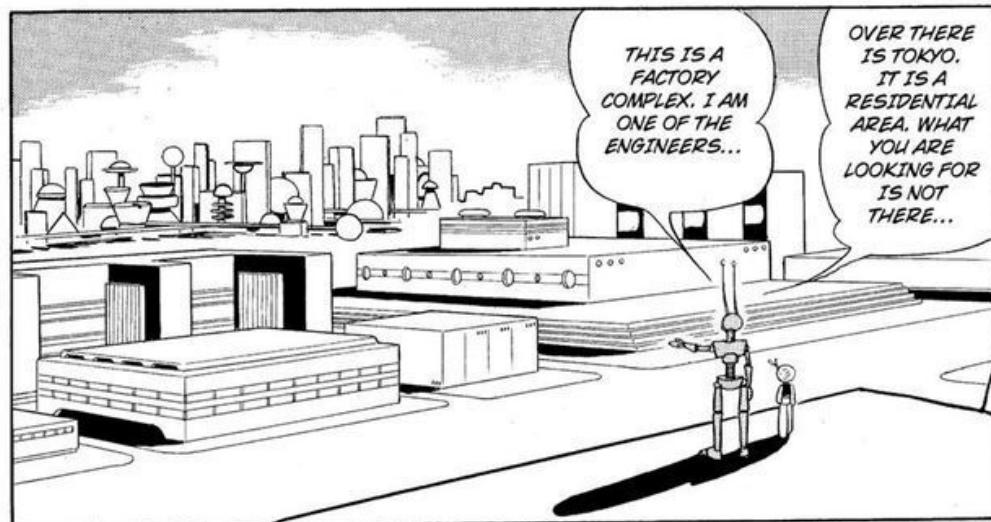
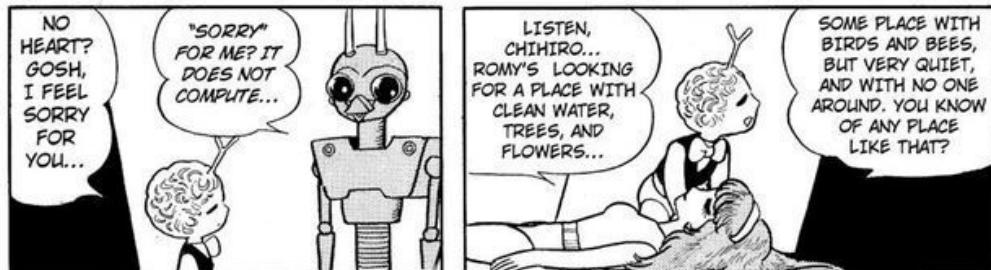
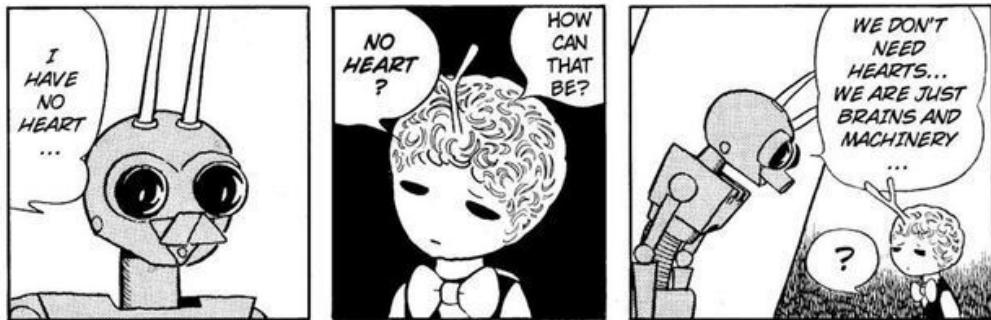
GLUBB...

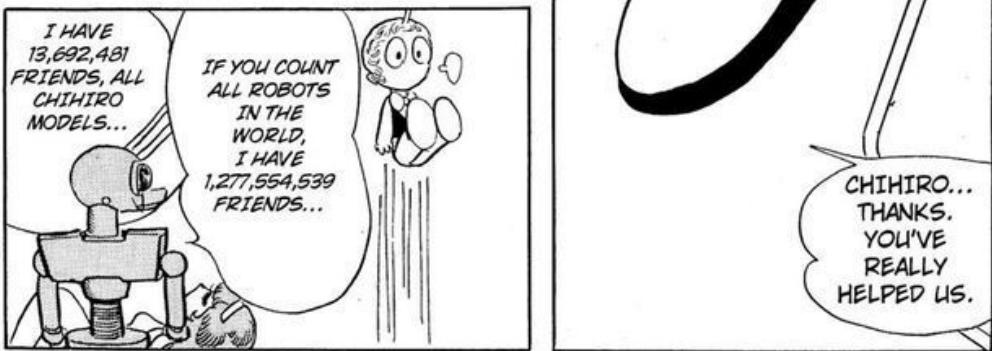
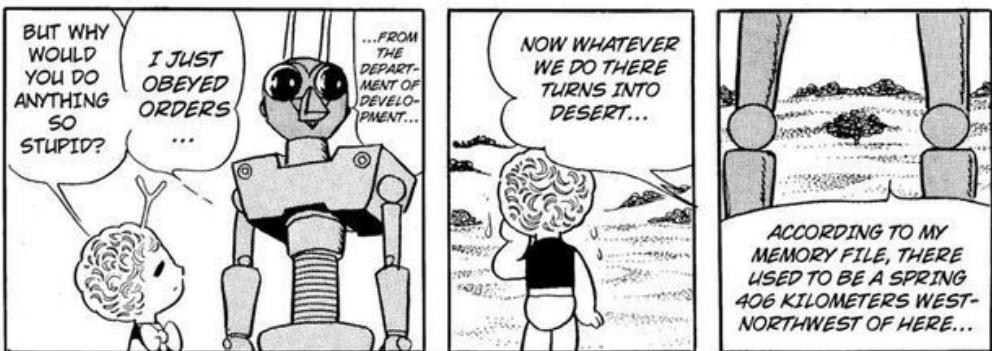
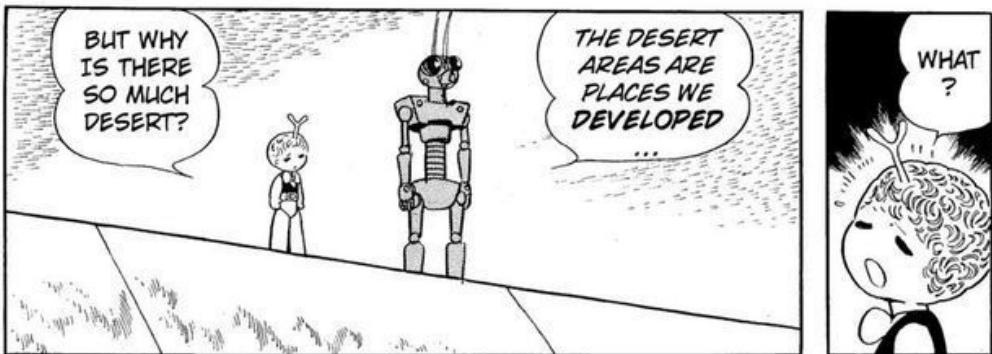


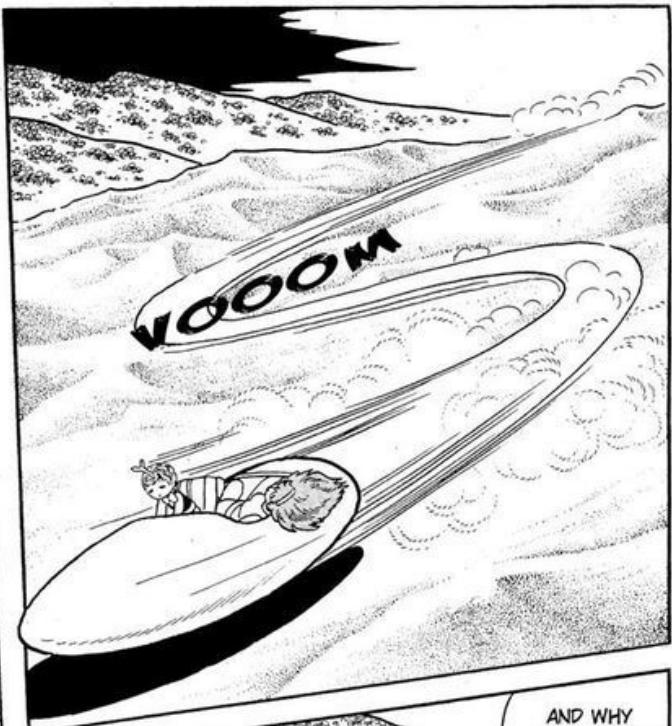






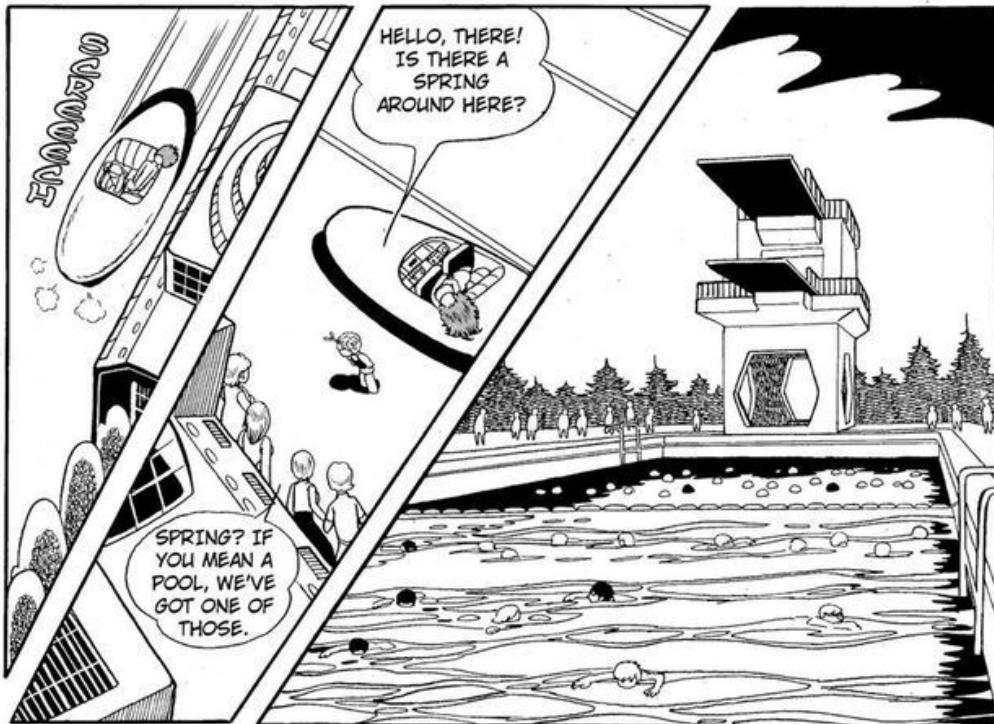


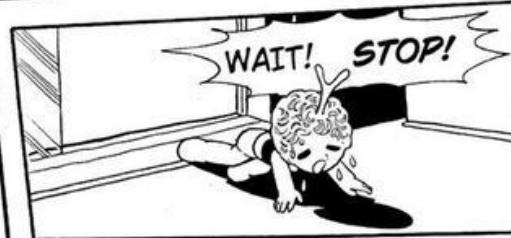
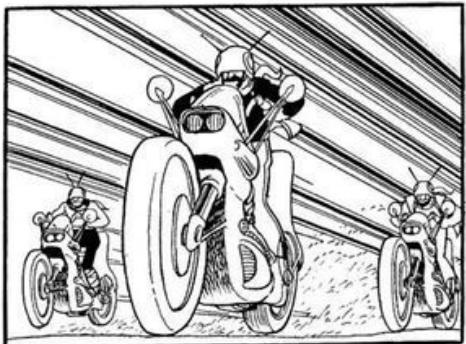


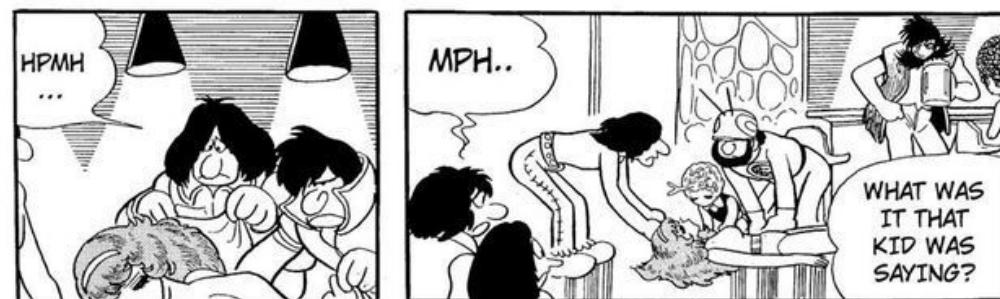


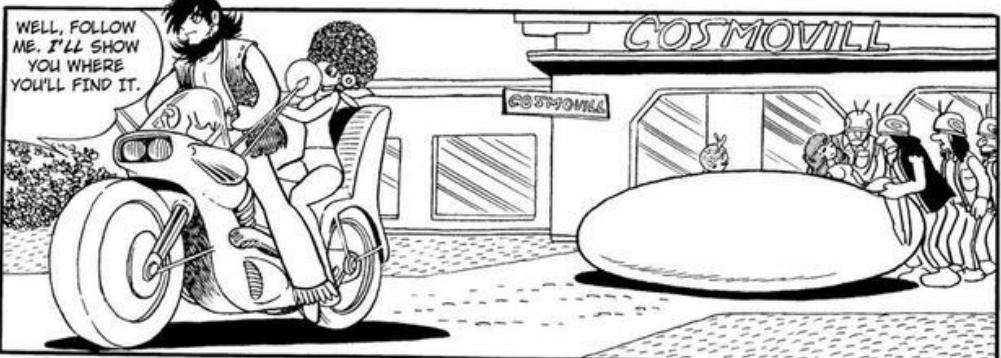
THE PAIR CONTINUED ON AND ON, WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A VAST WASTELAND BEFORE THEM. WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A PEACEFUL LAND OF PRETTY BIRDS AND ANIMALS, WAS NOW A BARREN DESERT, CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING LITTLE MORE THAN THE OCCASIONAL FLY, ANT OR MILLIPEDE.

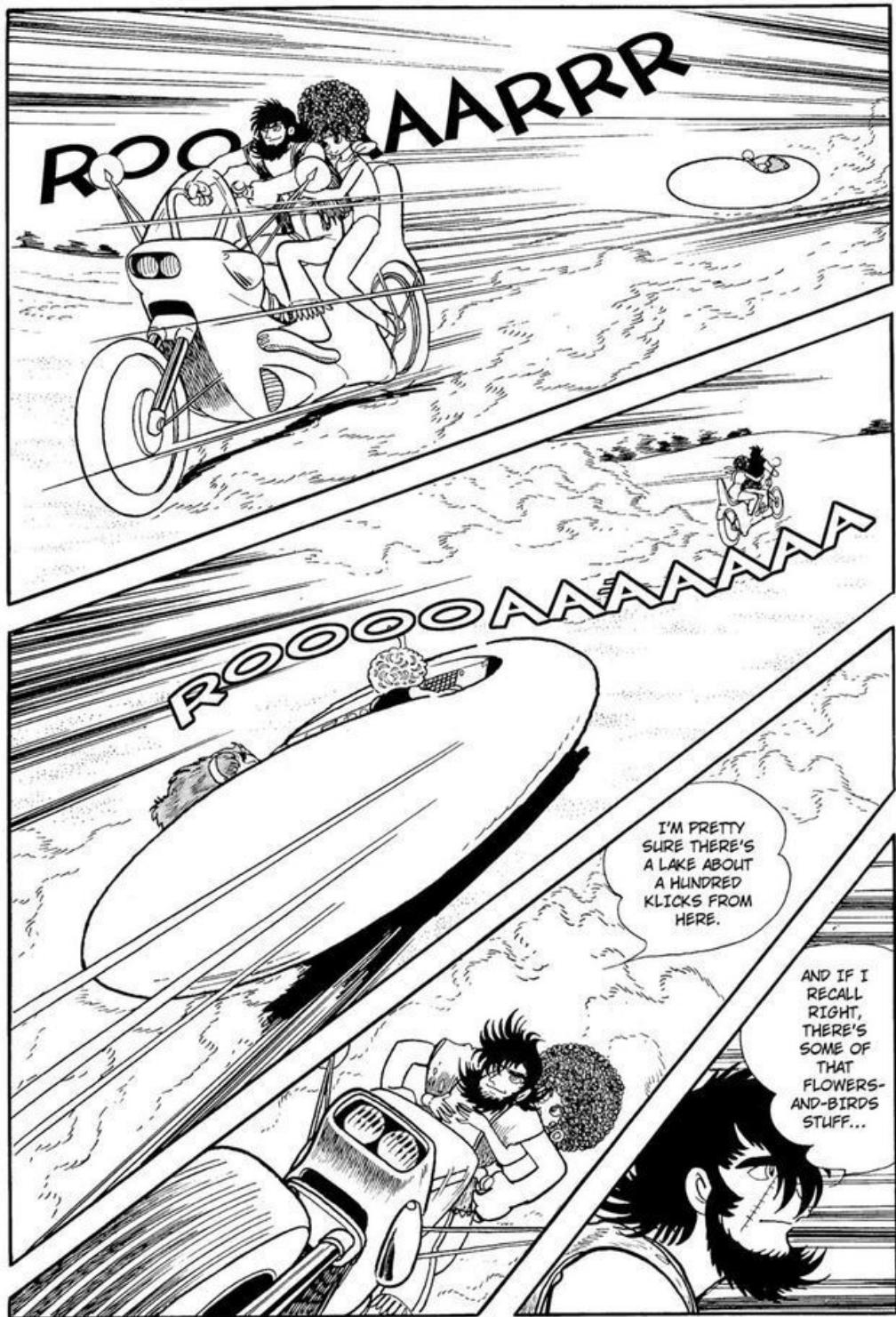


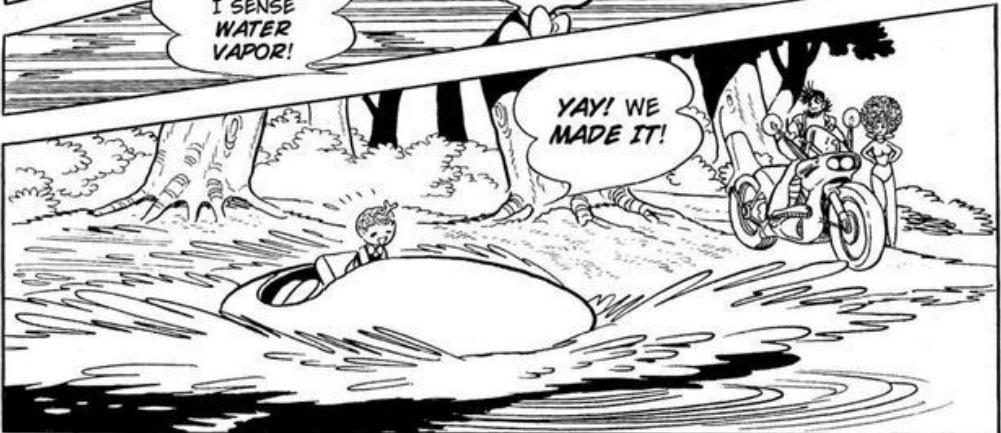
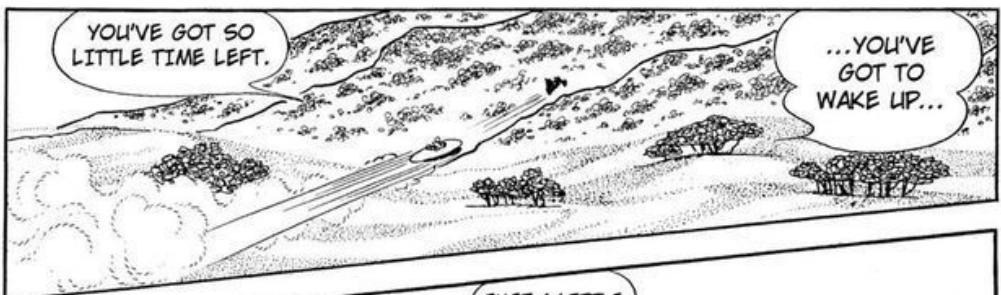


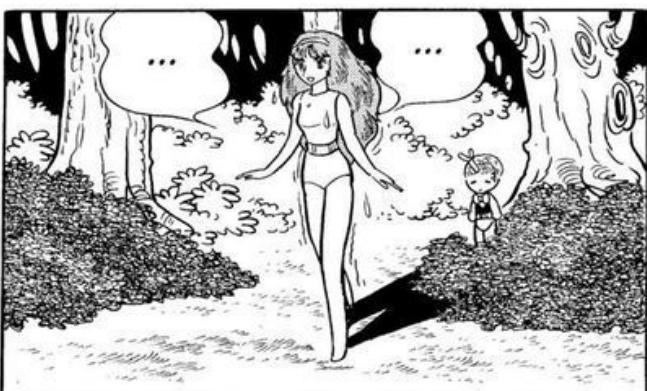




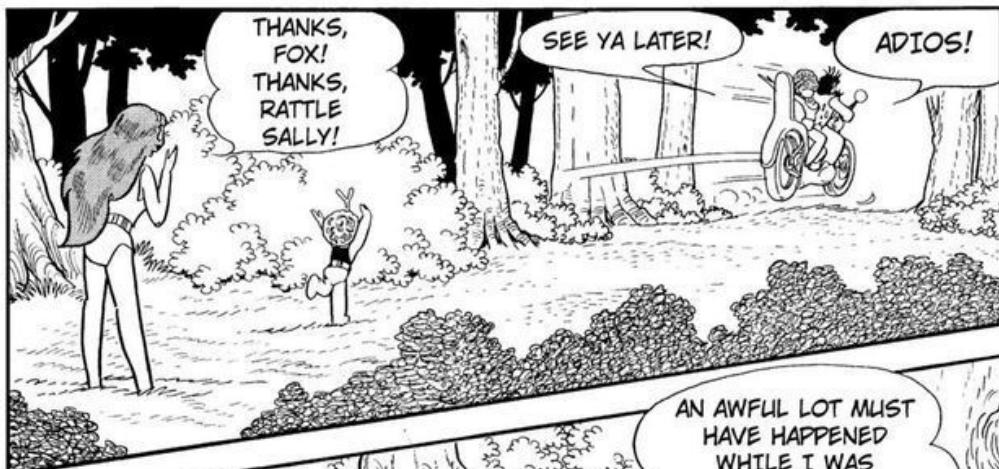




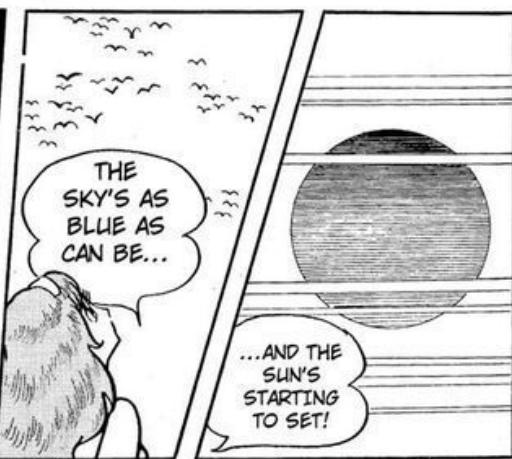






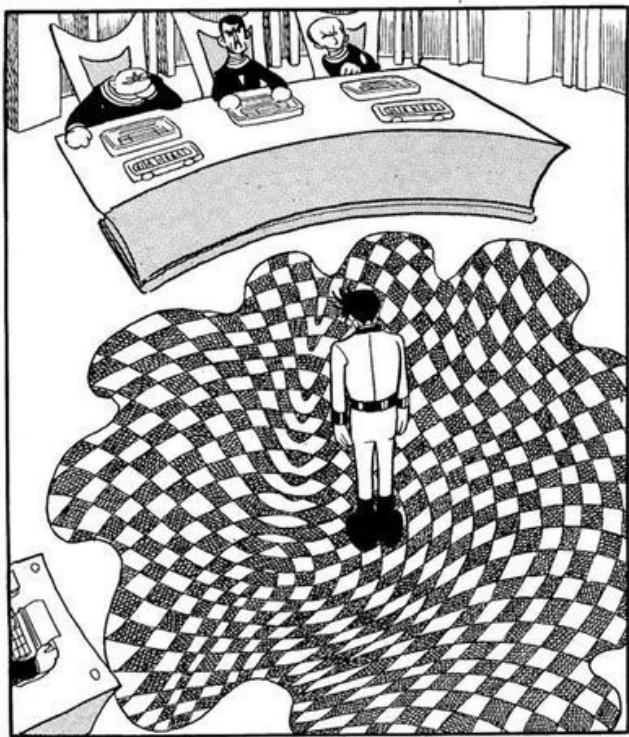


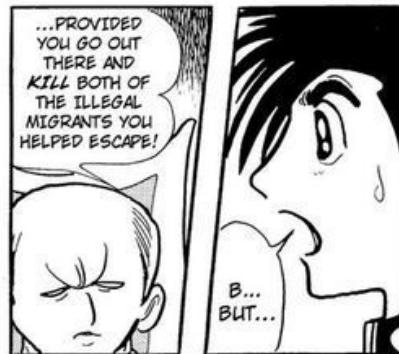
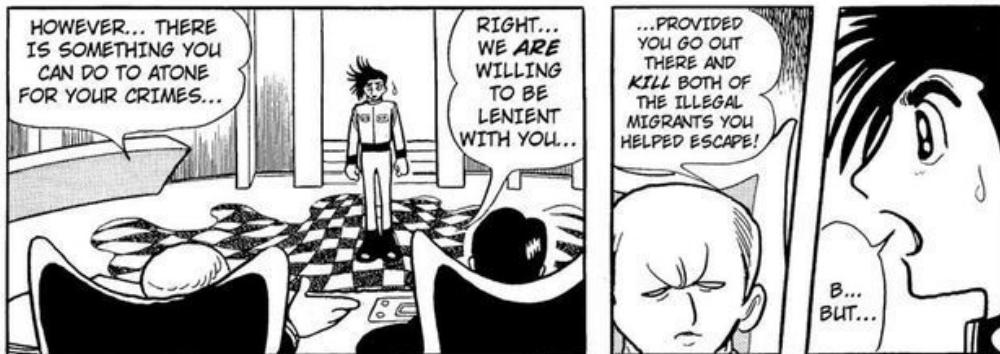




...AND THE SUN'S STARTING TO SET!



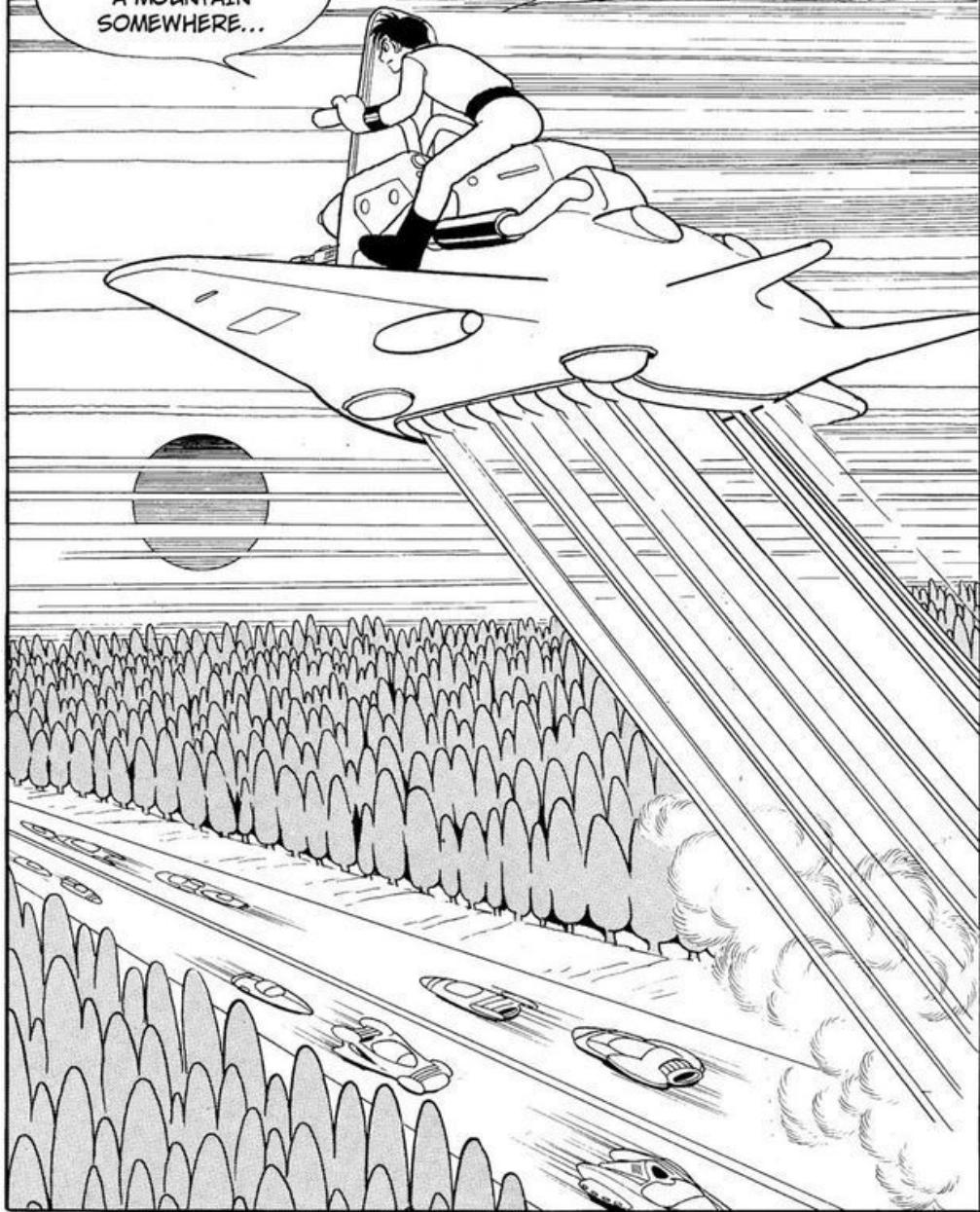


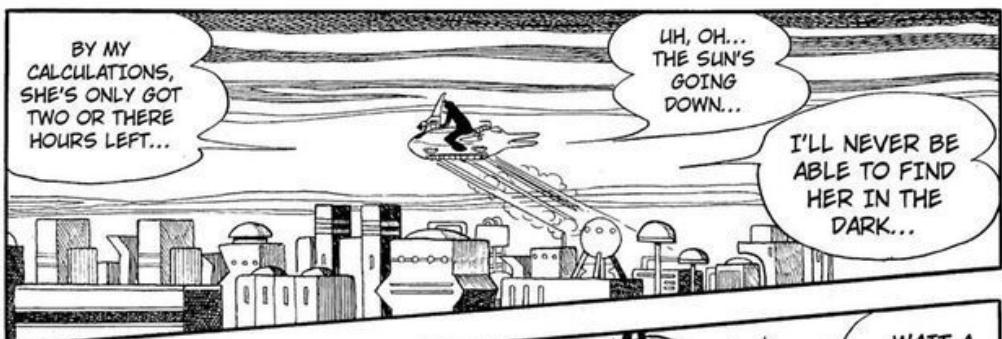
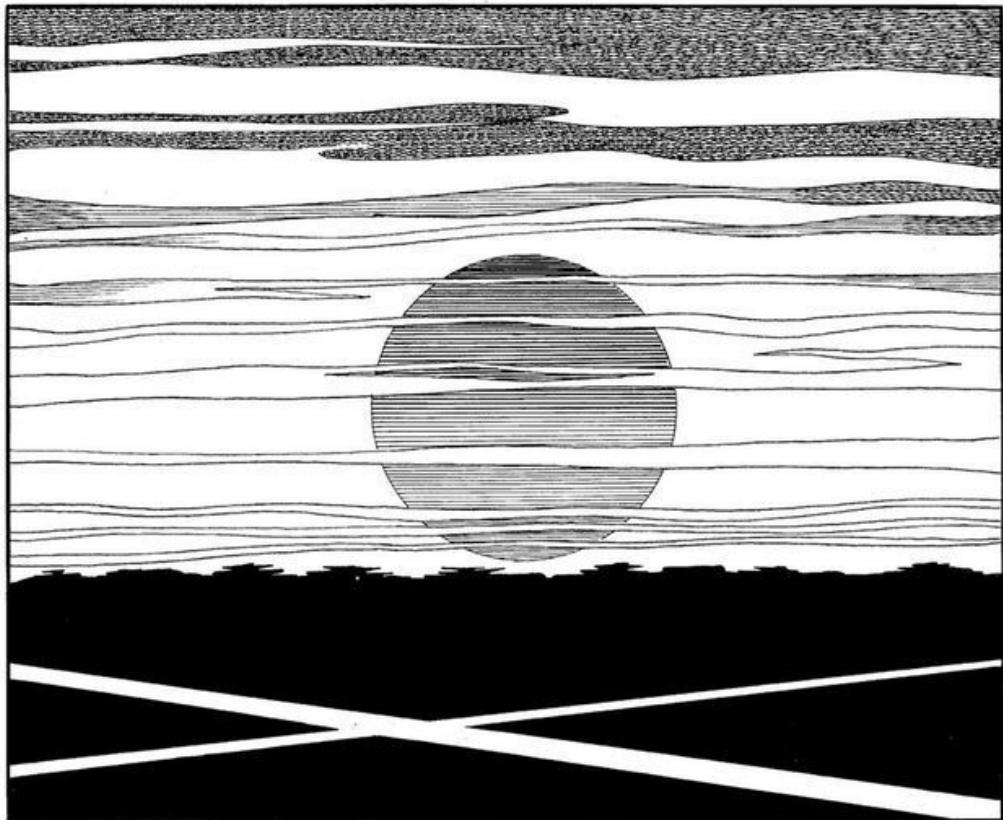


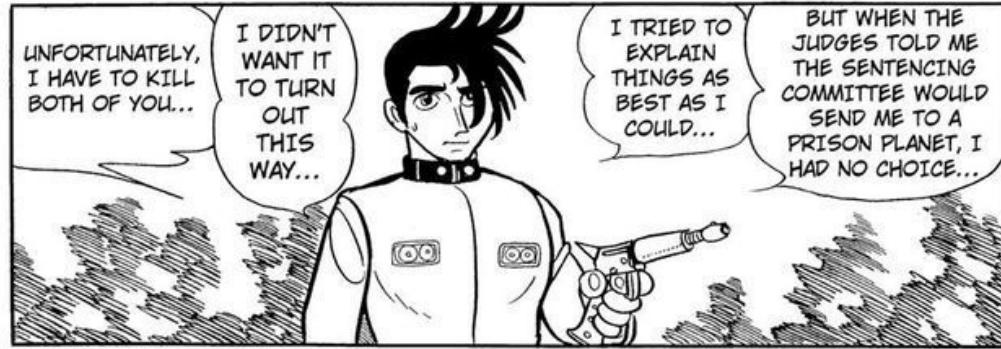
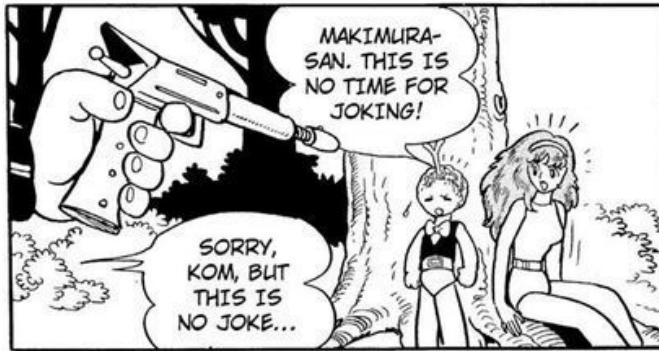
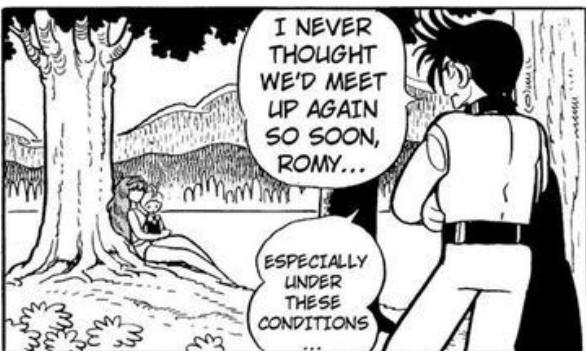


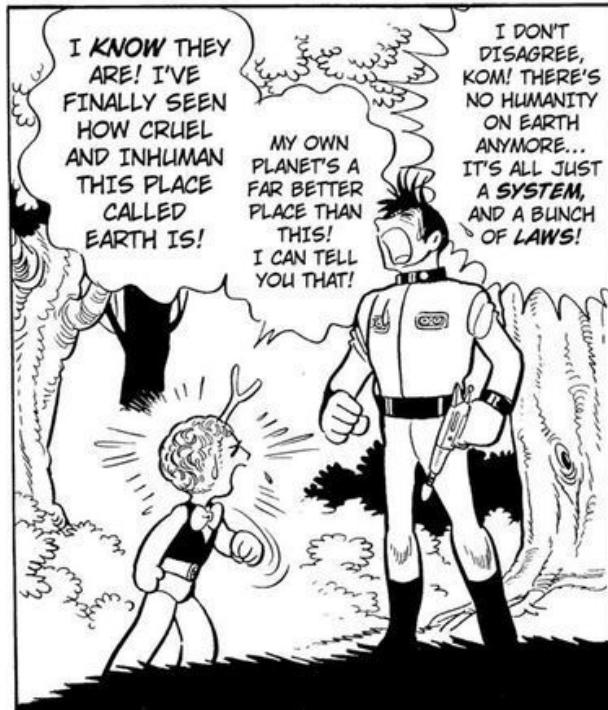
ROMY'S
PROBABLY
SPENDING HER
LAST MINUTES
NEXT TO A LAKE
AT THE FOOT OF
A MOUNTAIN
SOMEWHERE...

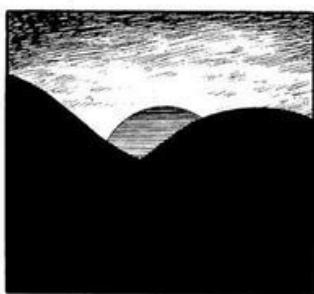
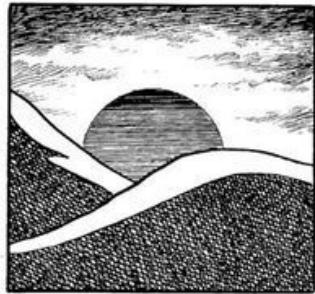
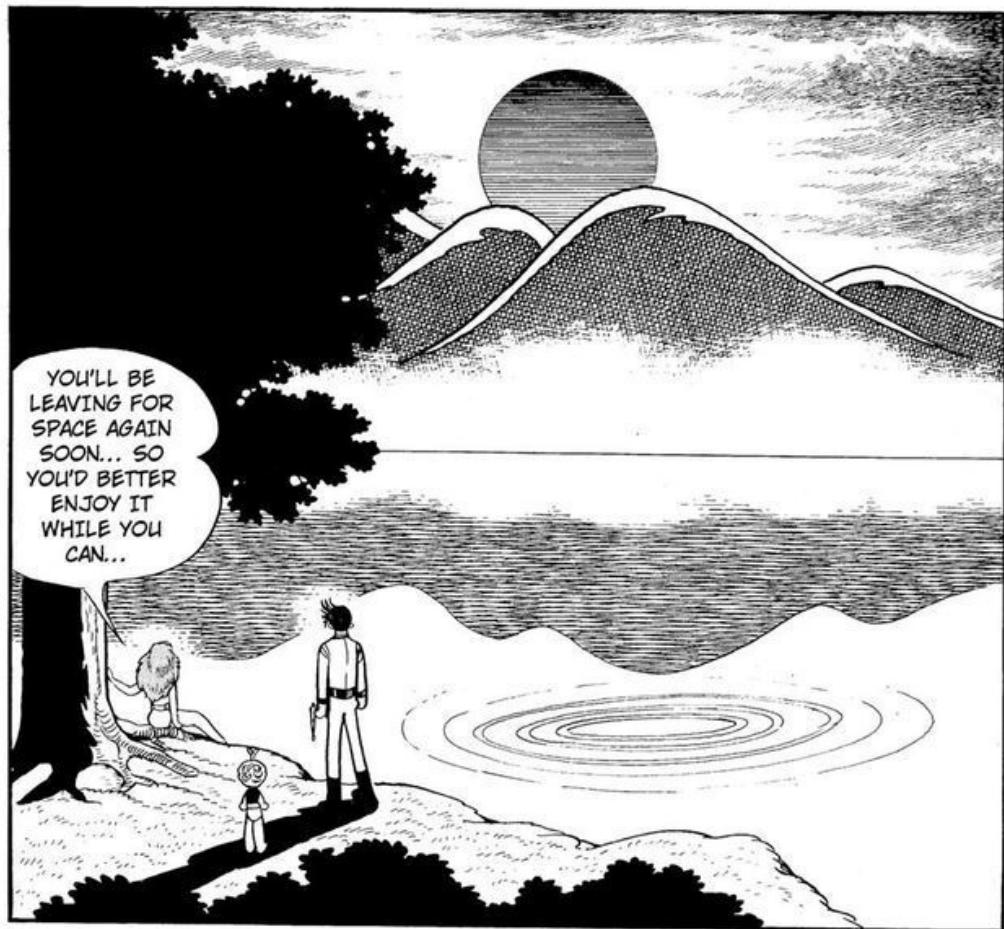
I'LL JUST
HAVE TO
CHECK
EVERY PLACE
I CAN...



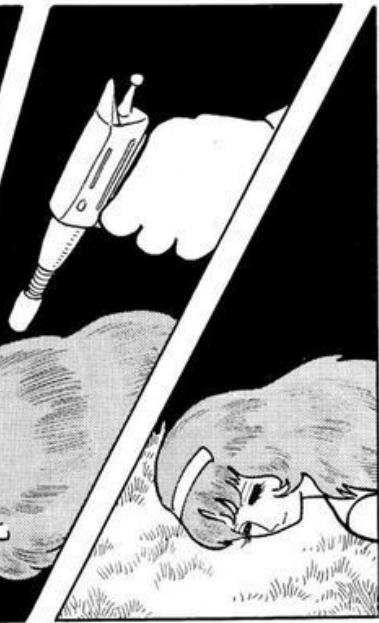


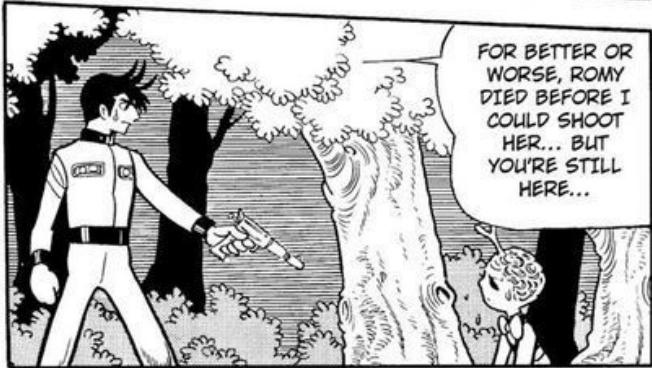
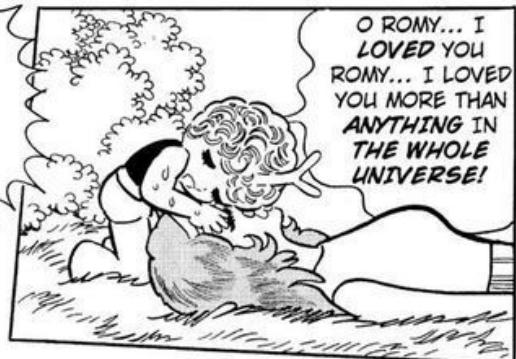


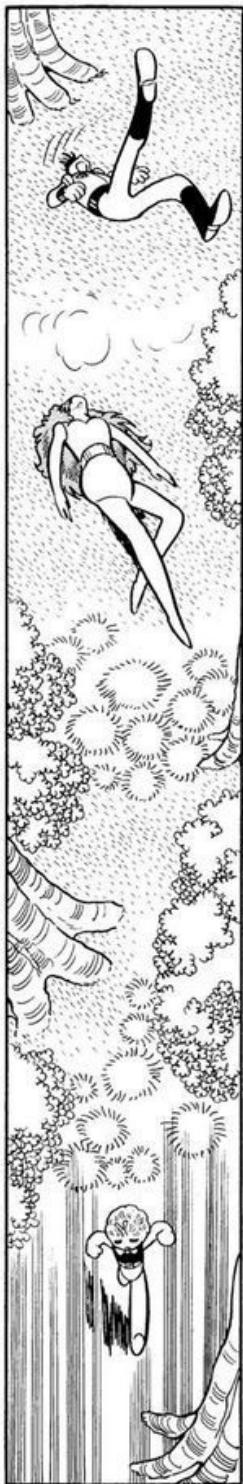


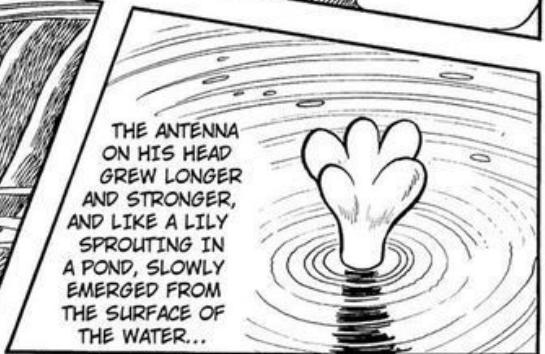
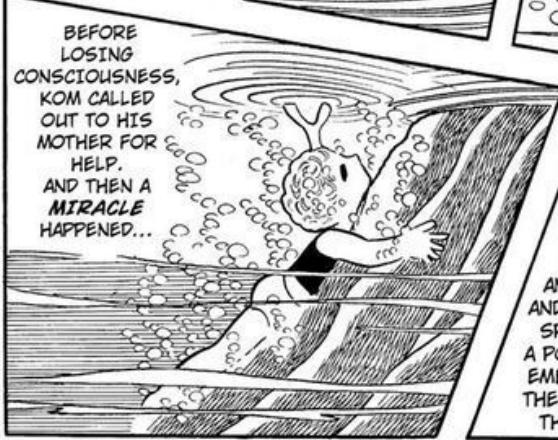
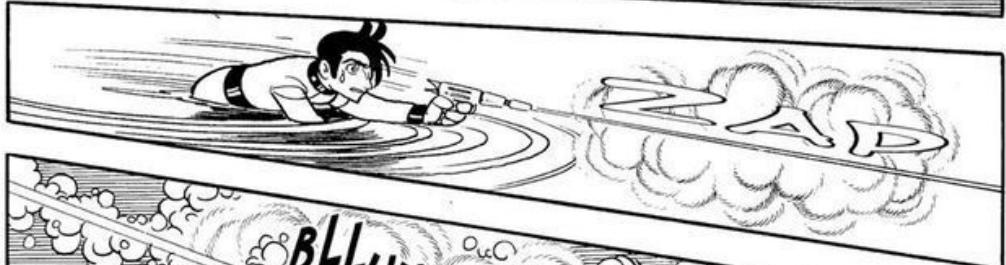


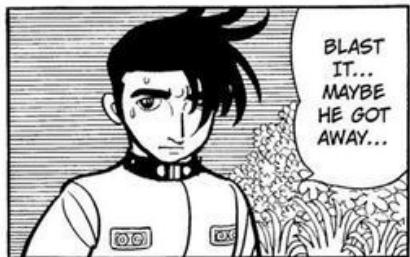
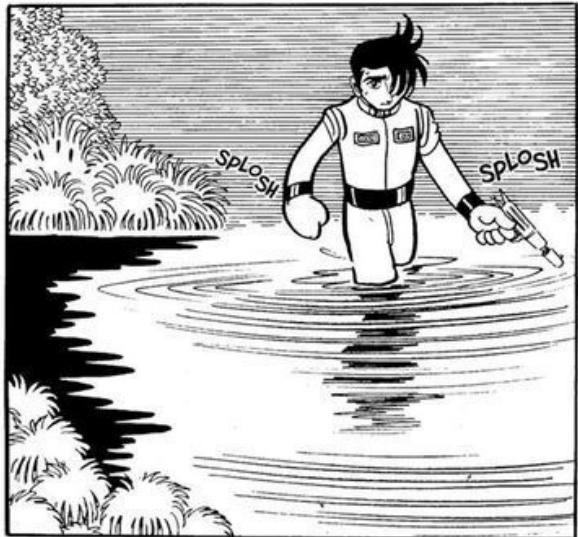




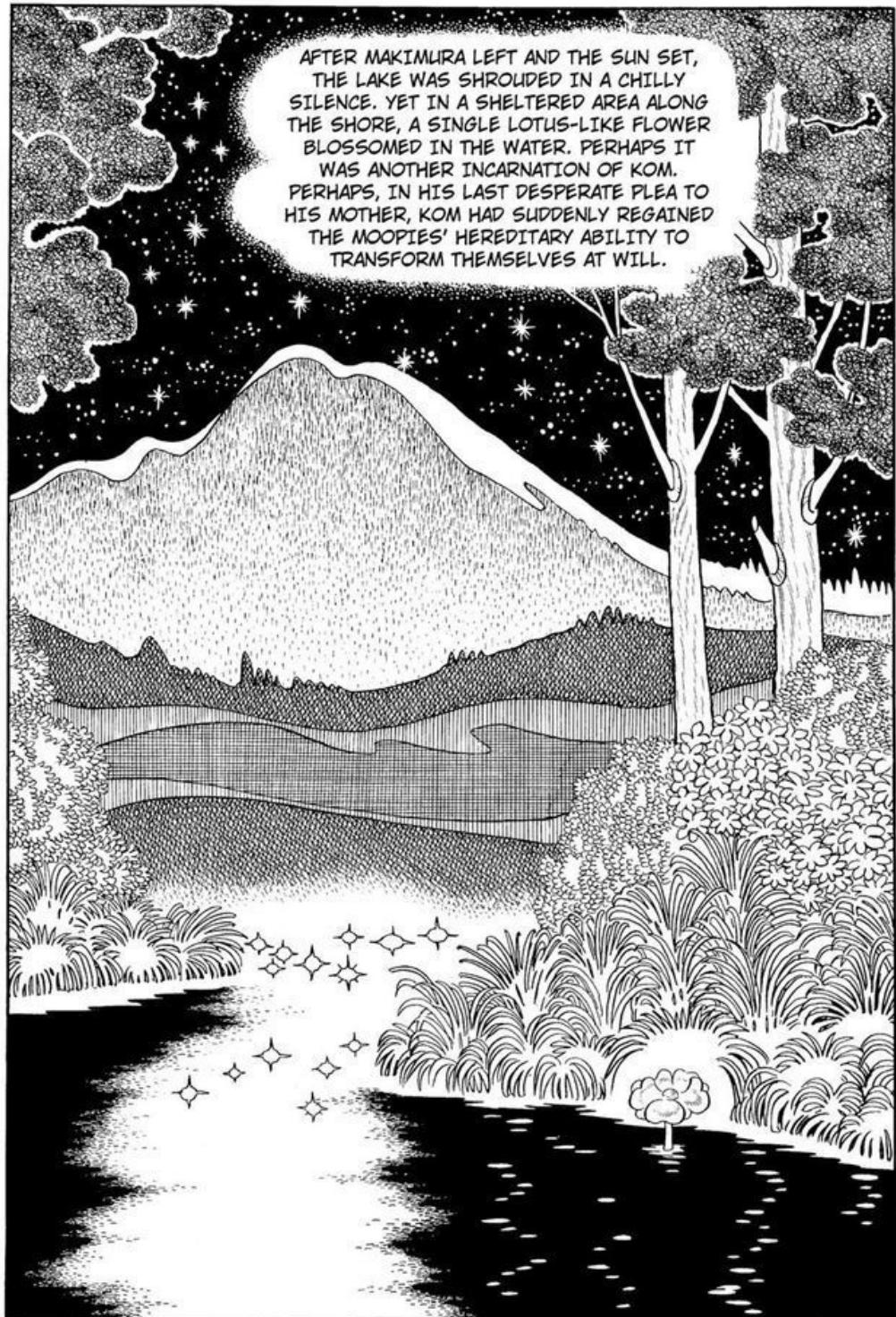


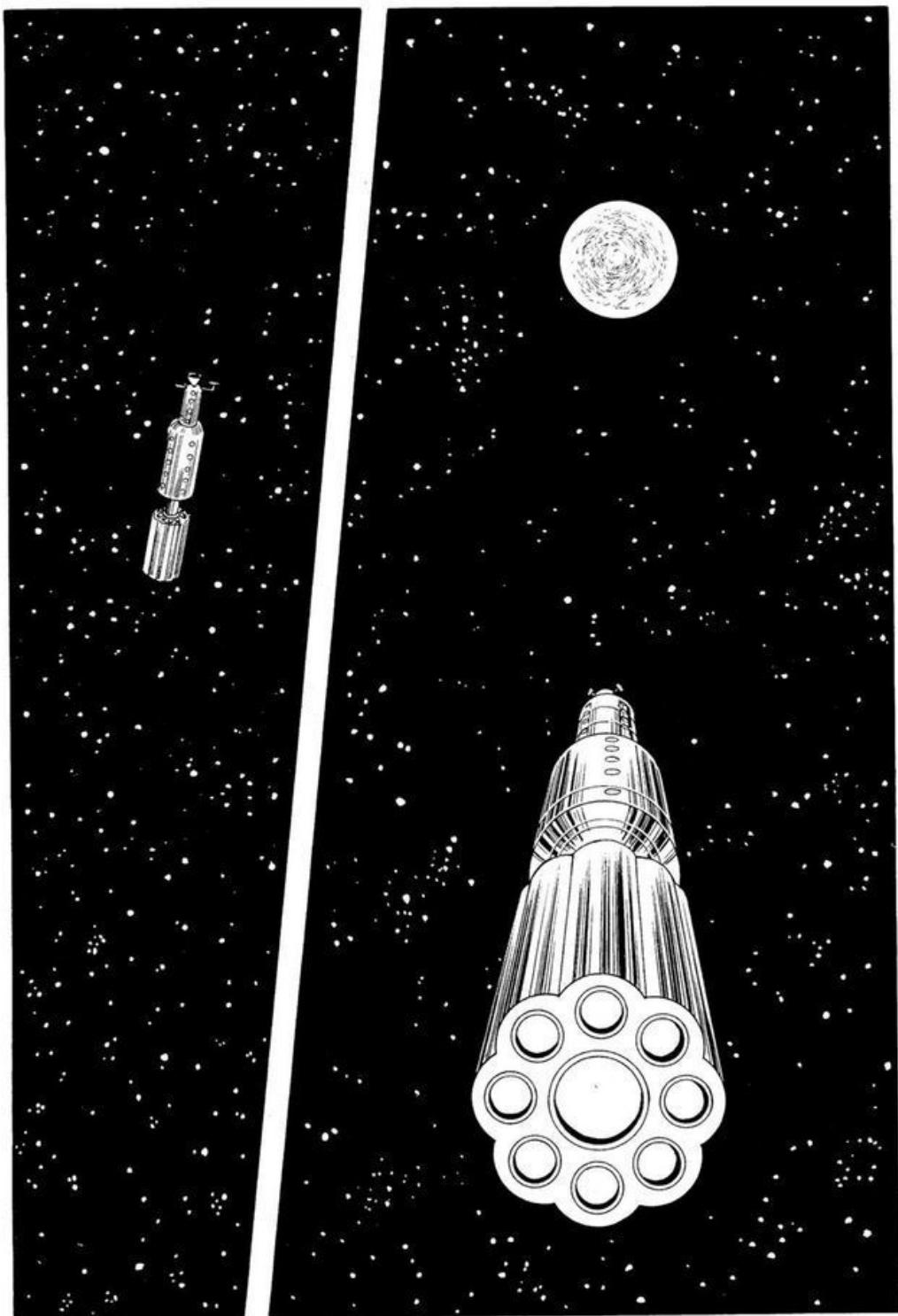


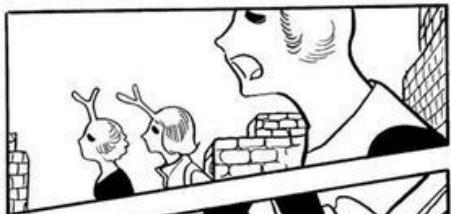
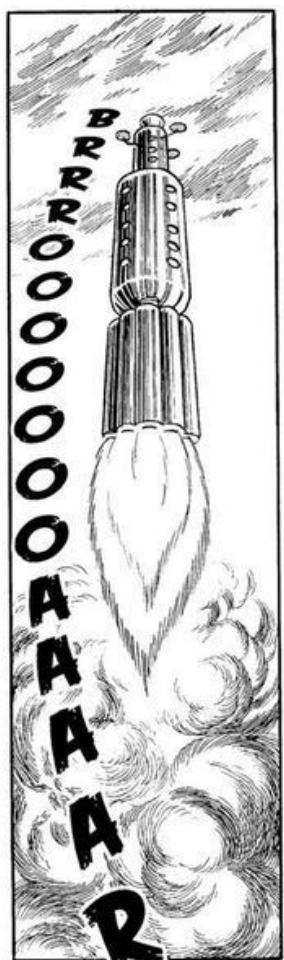
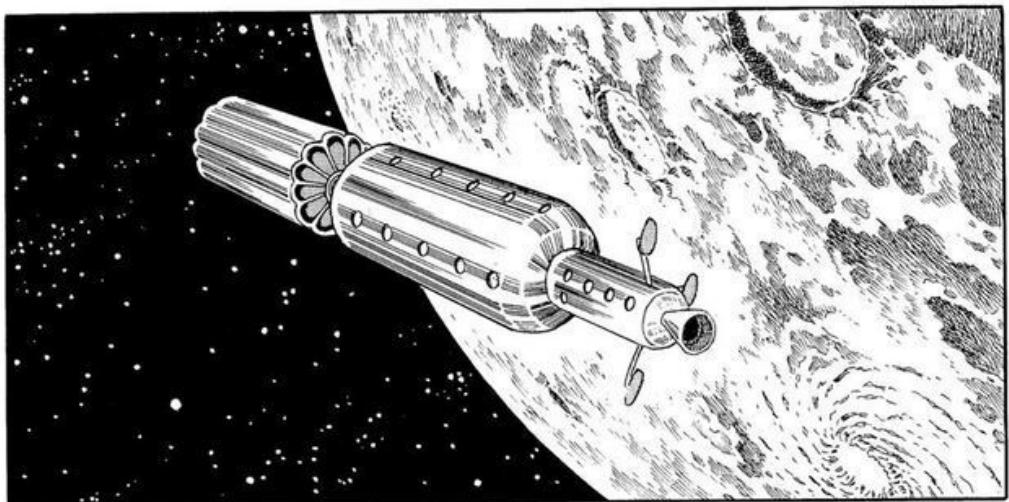


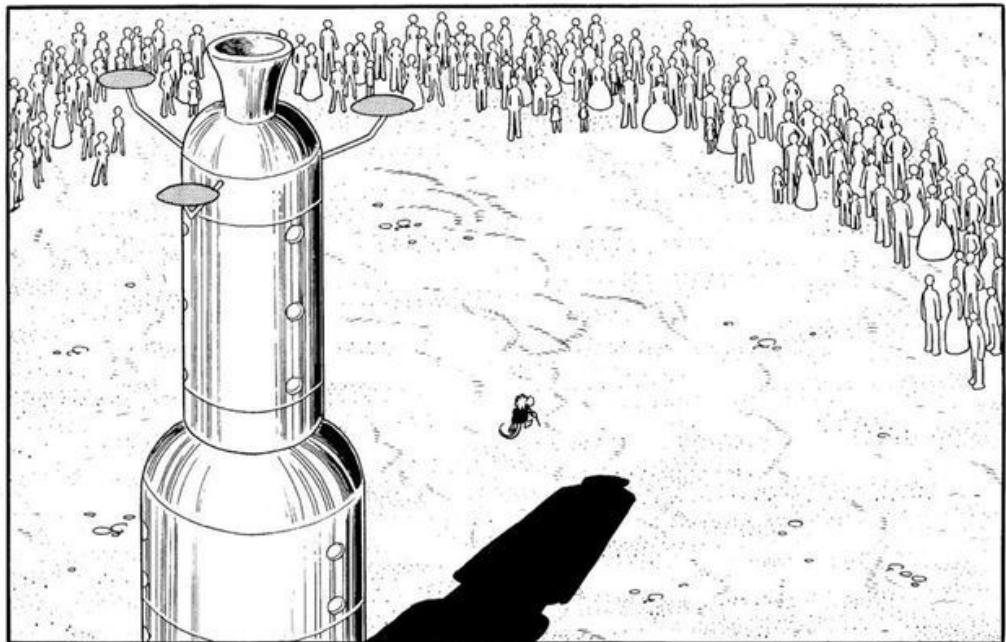


AFTER MAKIMURA LEFT AND THE SUN SET,
THE LAKE WAS SHROUDDED IN A CHILLY
SILENCE. YET IN A SHELTERED AREA ALONG
THE SHORE, A SINGLE LOTUS-LIKE FLOWER
BLOSSOMED IN THE WATER. PERHAPS IT
WAS ANOTHER INCARNATION OF KOM.
PERHAPS, IN HIS LAST DESPERATE PLEA TO
HIS MOTHER, KOM HAD SUDDENLY REGAINED
THE MOOPIES' HEREDITARY ABILITY TO
TRANSFORM THEMSELVES AT WILL.



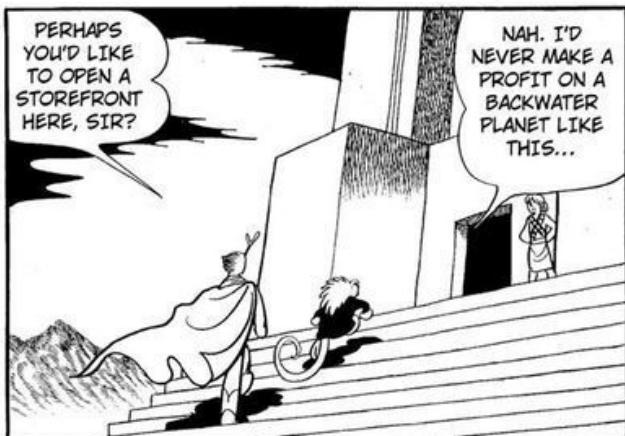
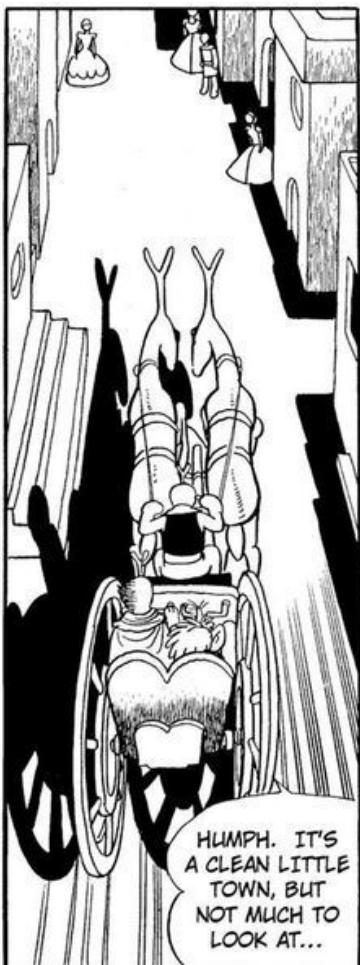
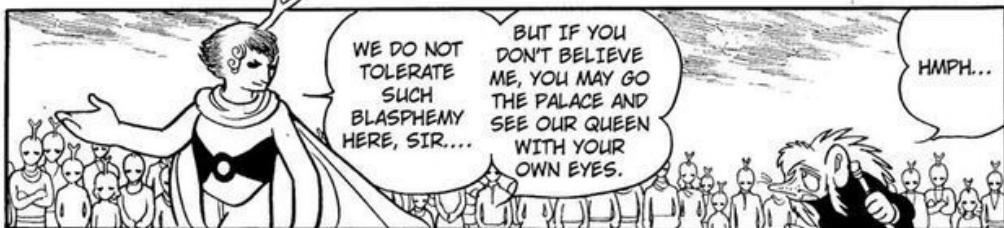


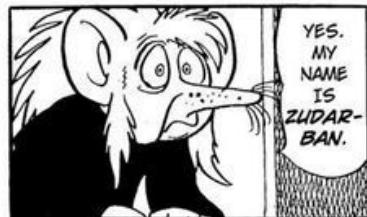


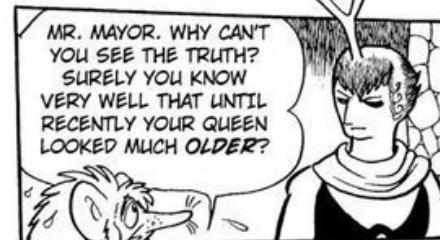
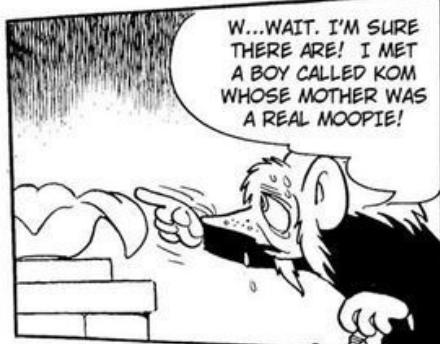


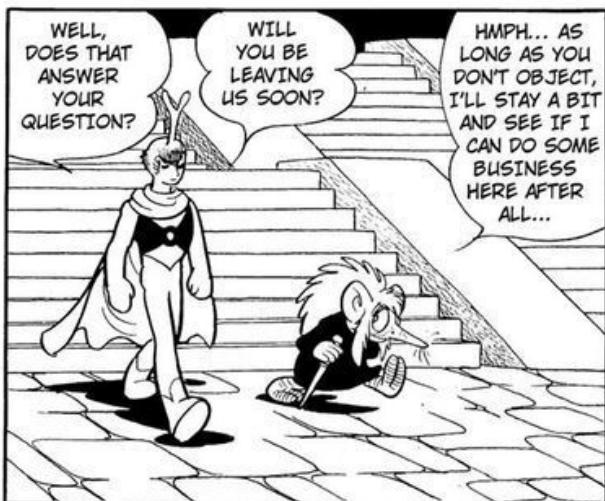


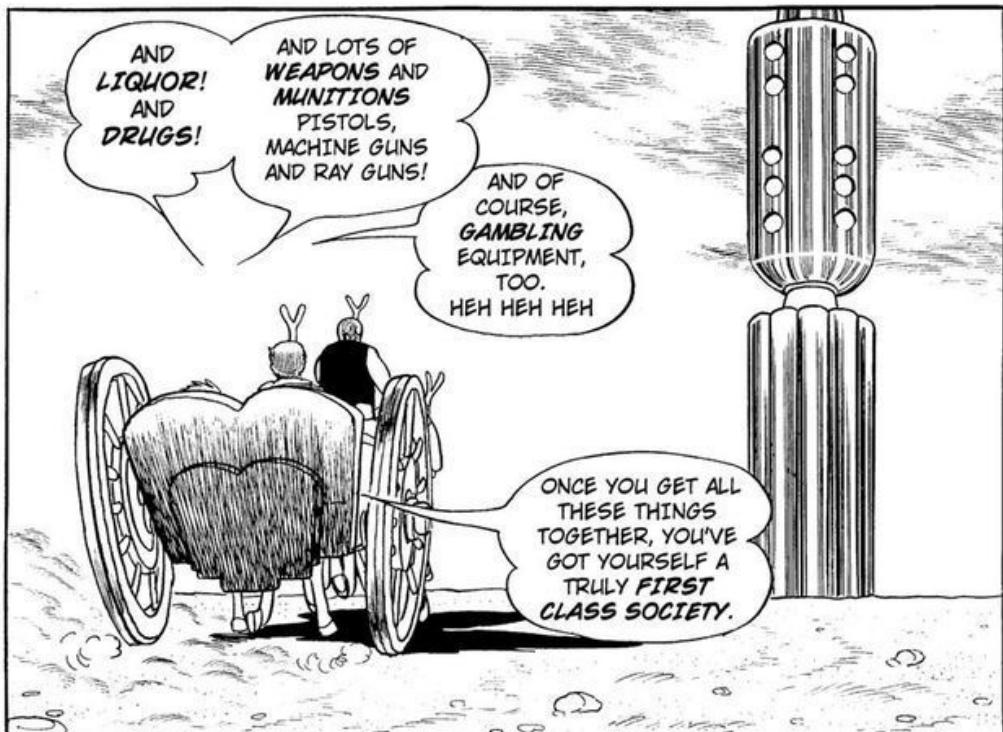


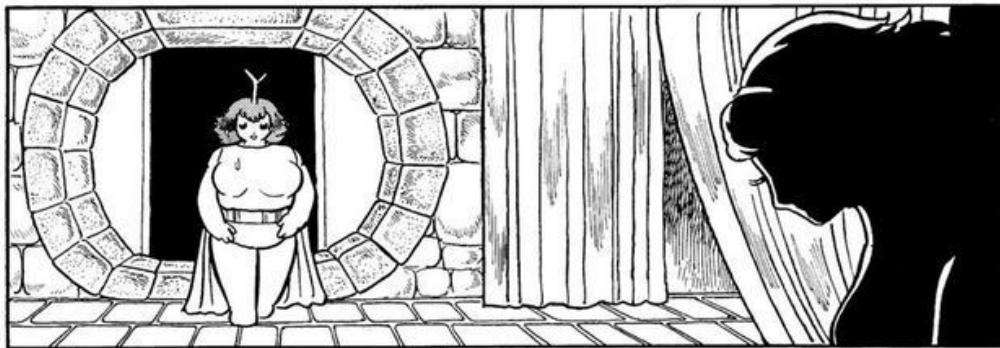


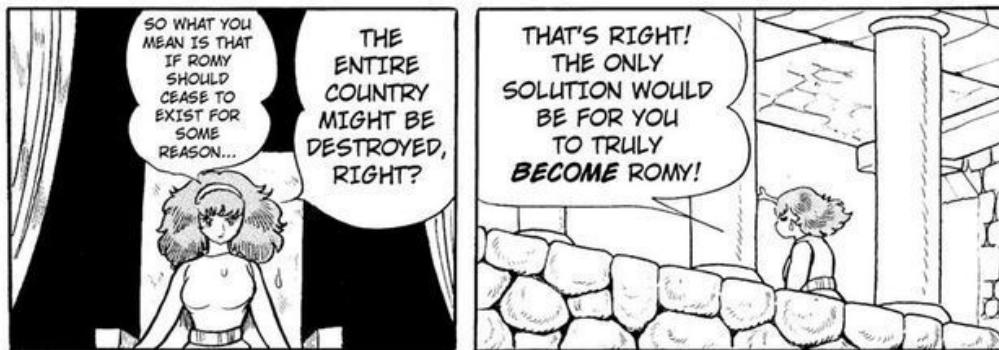


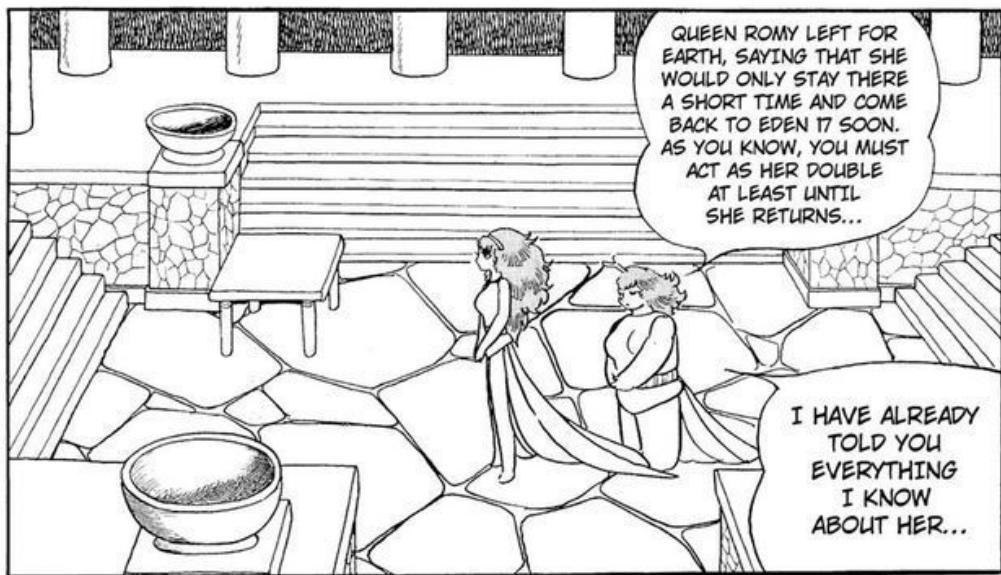


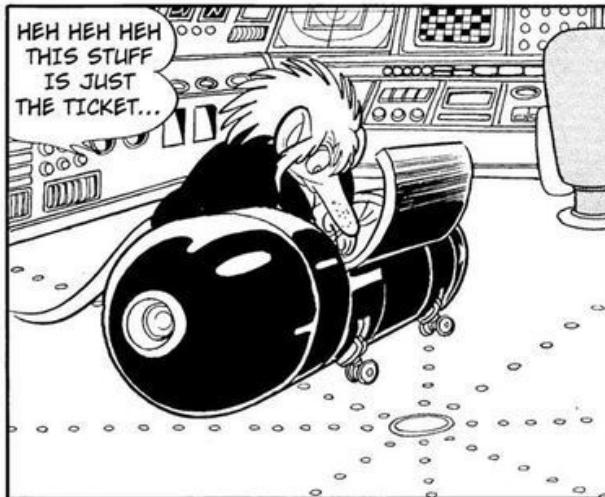
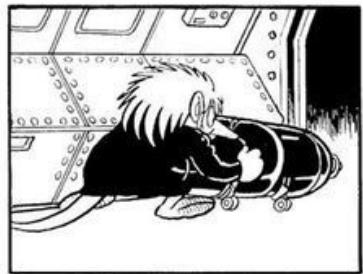
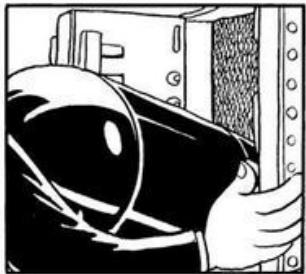










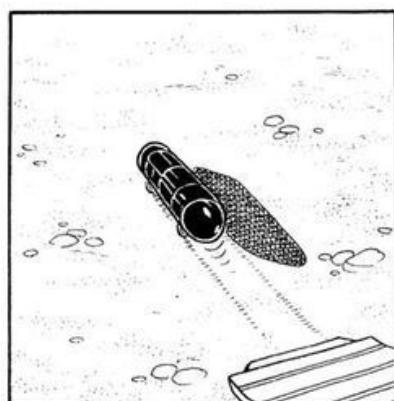
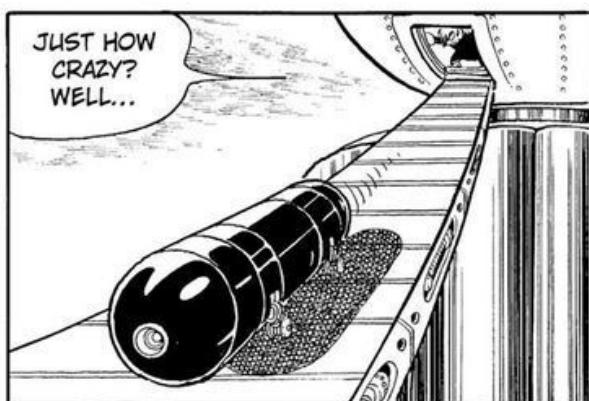


...IN THE HUNTING DOG GALAXY.



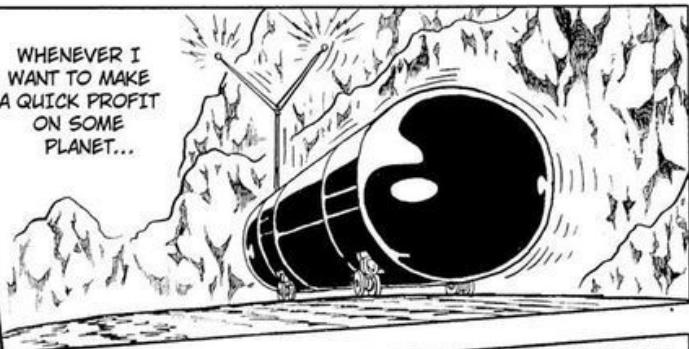
...IN AT LEAST THREE DAYS... THREE DAYS, TOPS...

THEN THEY'LL ALL GO CRAZY...

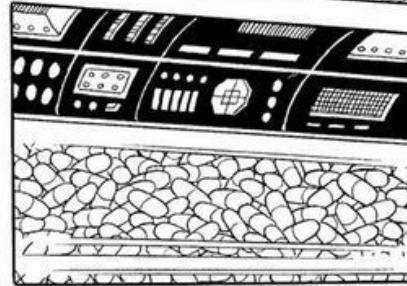
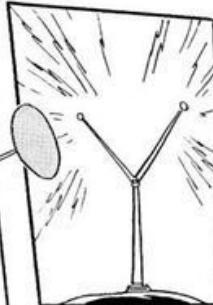
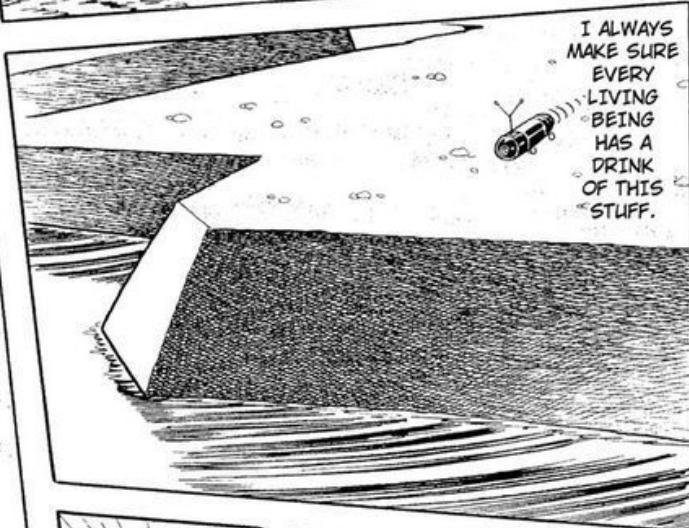


FIRST,
THEY'LL
UNDERGO
FEELINGS OF
INSATIABLE
DESIRE...
AN
UNQUENCHABLE
THIRST FOR
LUXURY AND
POSSES-
SIONS...
UNCONTROL-
LABLE
LAZINESS ...
A NEED FOR
CONQUEST...
AND AN
INSATIABLE
CRAVING FOR
SEX!

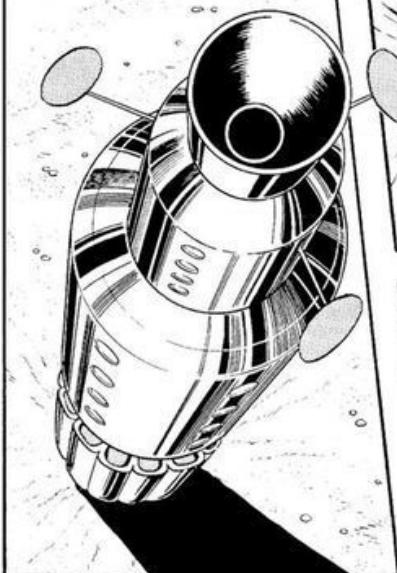
WHENEVER I
WANT TO MAKE
A QUICK PROFIT
ON SOME
PLANET...

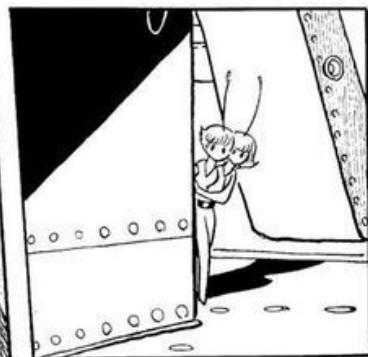
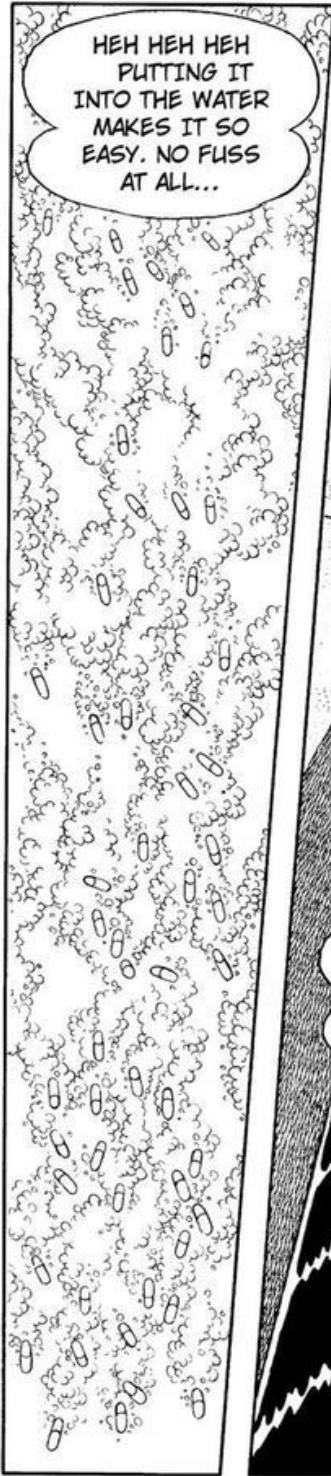


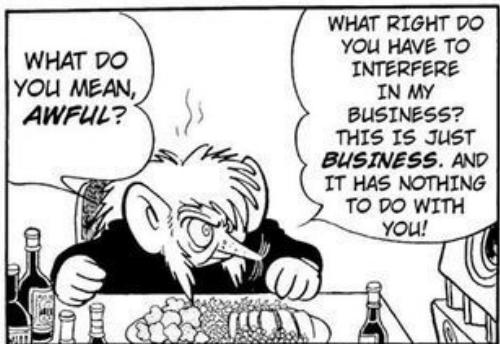
I ALWAYS
MAKE SURE
EVERY
LIVING
BEING
HAS A
DRINK
OF THIS
STUFF.

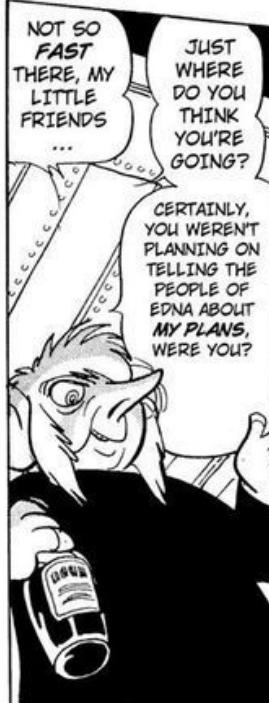
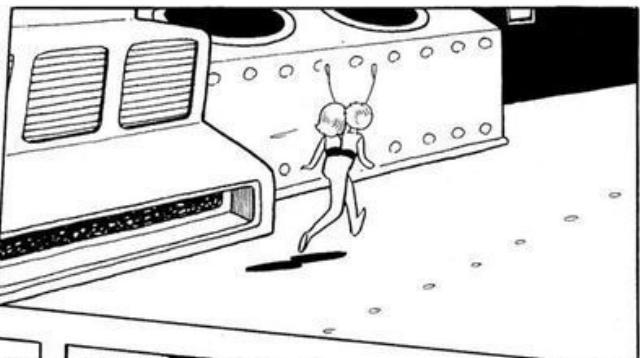
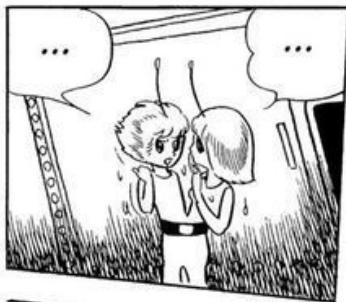


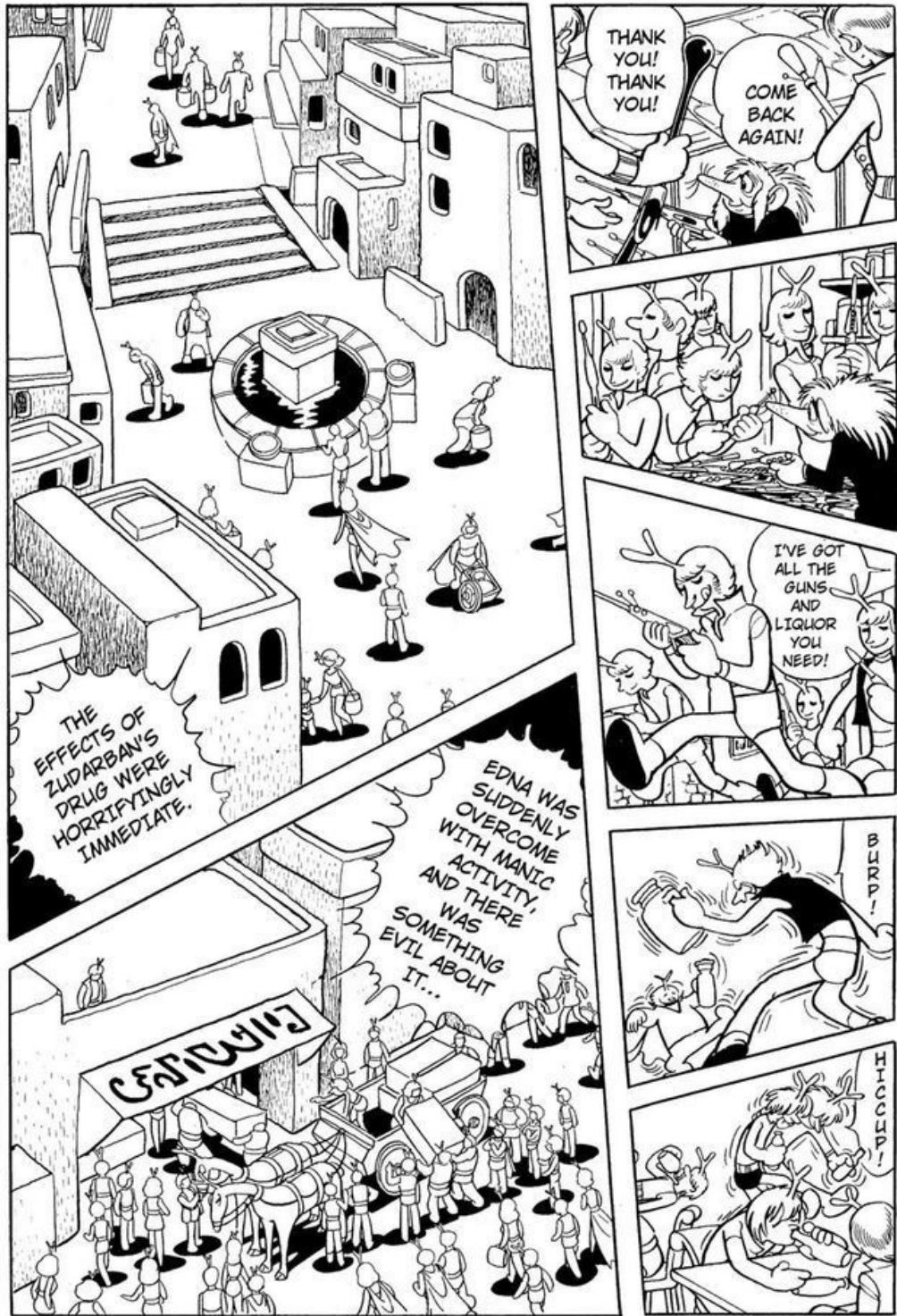
THERE IT GOES.
RIGHT INTO THE
WATER SUPPLY.













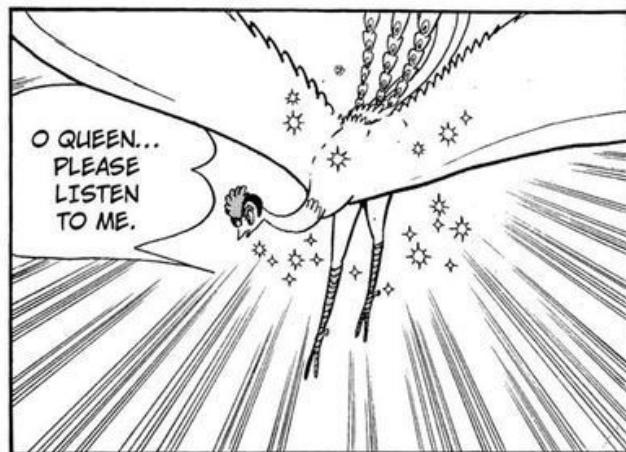
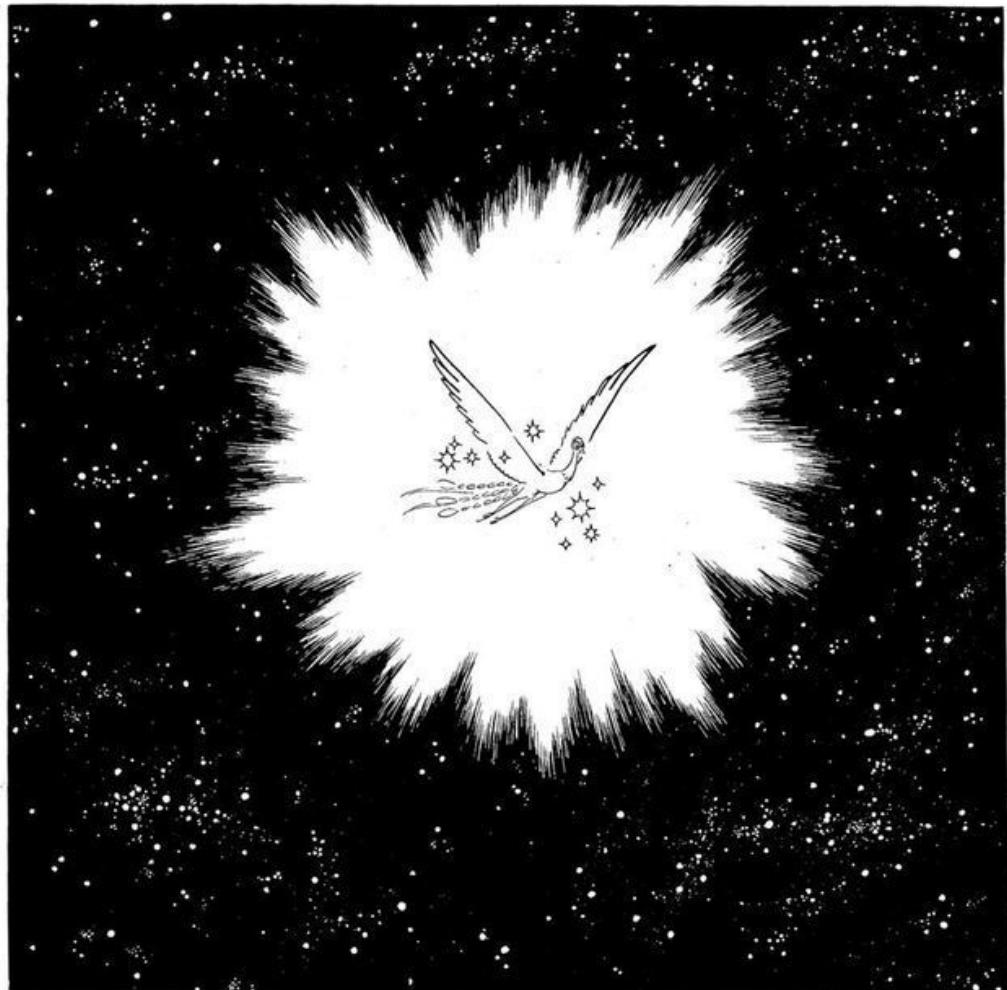




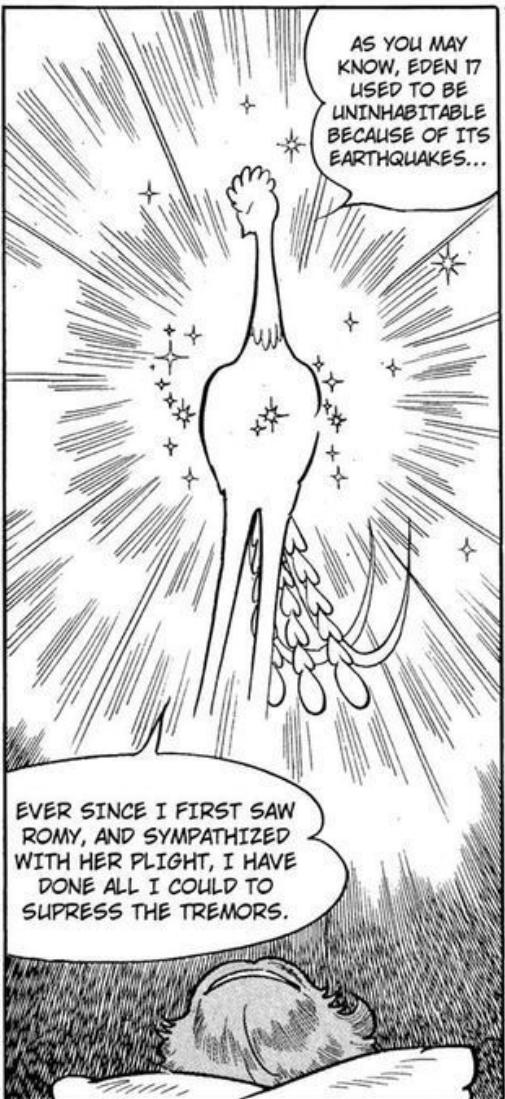
IN LESS THAN SIX MONTHS EDNA WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PLACE. IT BECAME A FILTHY DEN OF CRIMINALS, DEVOID OF ALL TRACES OF ITS FORMERLY WHOLESOME AND CLEAN SELF.

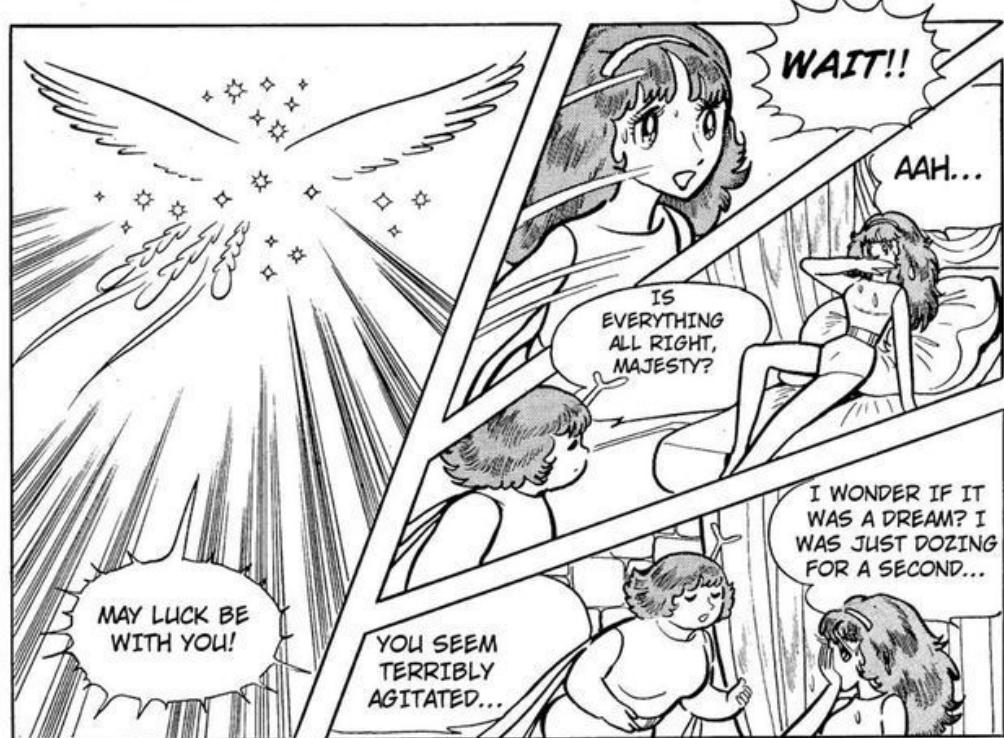


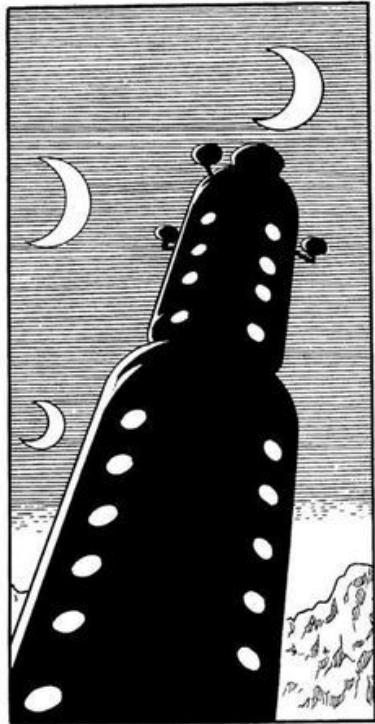
I SENSED THAT EDEN 17 WAS NEARING ITS END. IN SIX MONTHS THE CITIZENS OF THE PLANET HAD ACQUIRED ALL THE EVIL TRAITS THAT IT HAD TAKEN PEOPLE ON EARTH THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO DEVELOP...

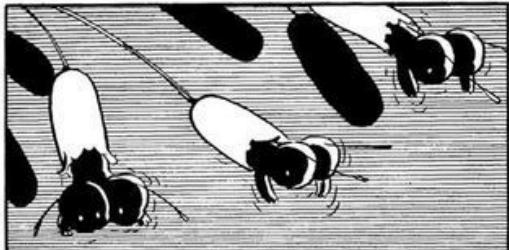


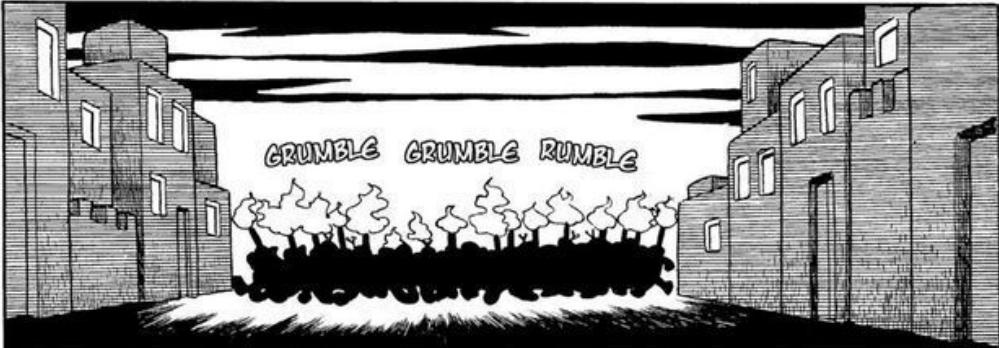
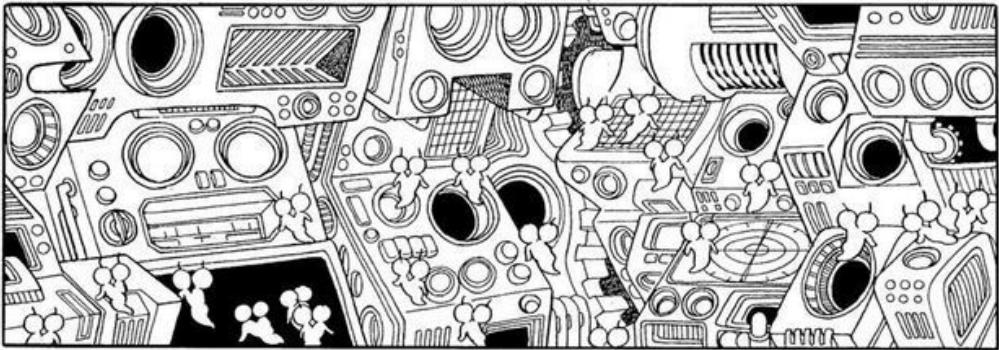
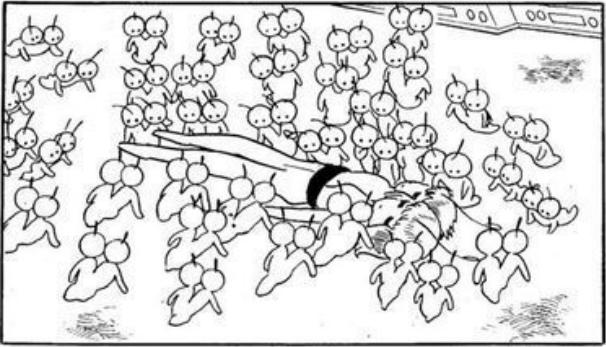
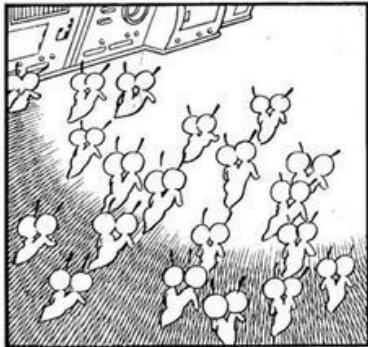




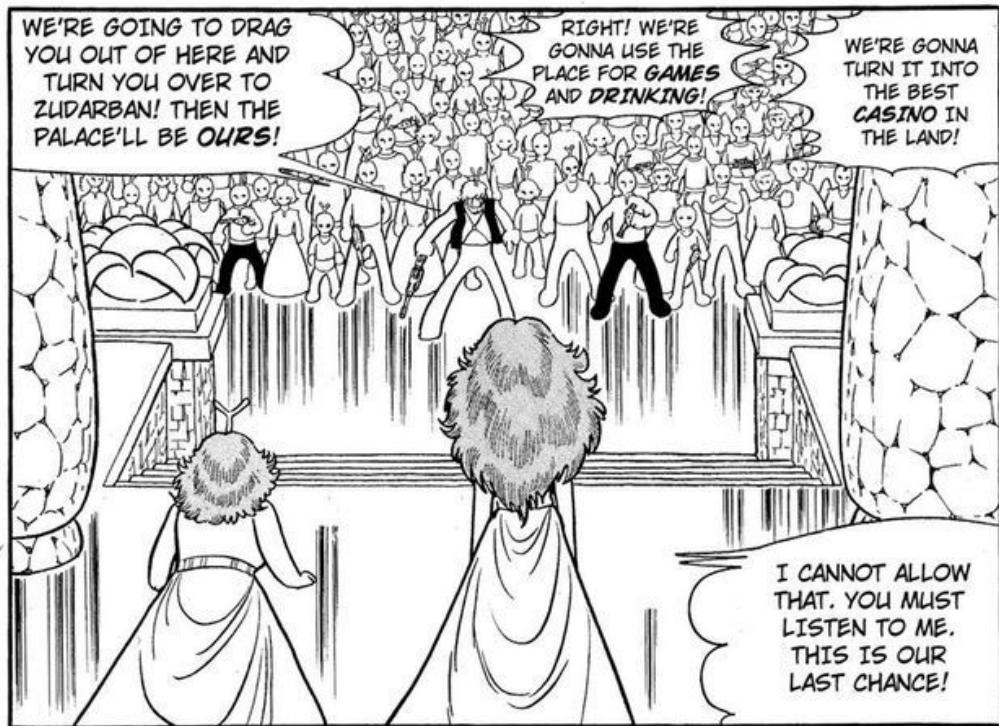
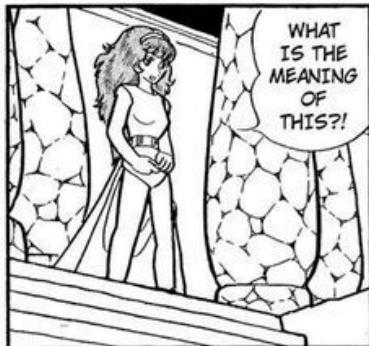


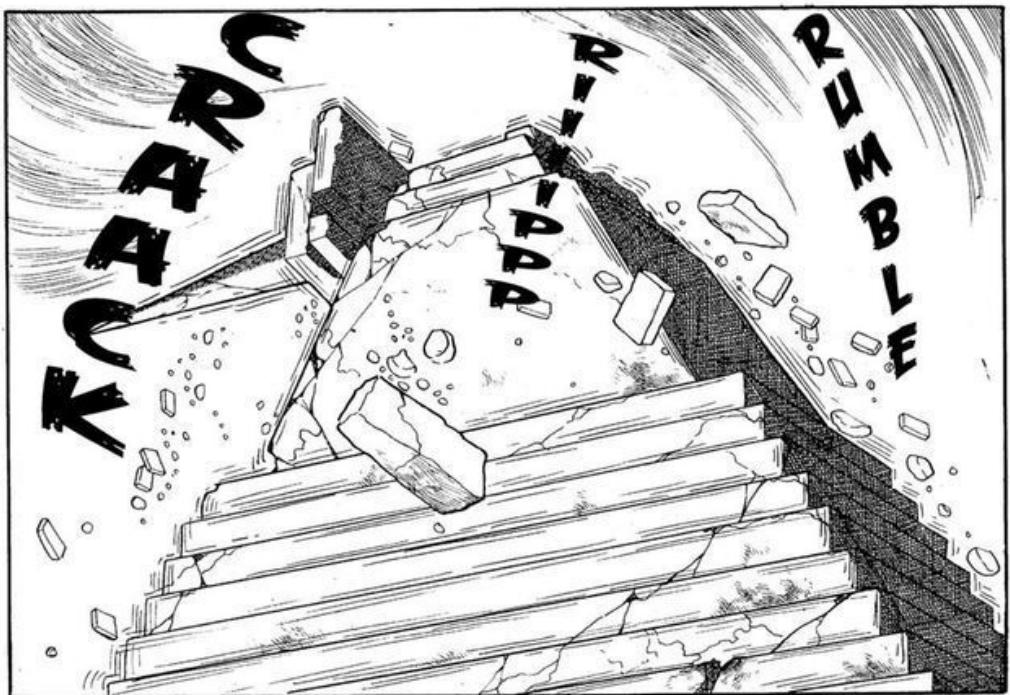




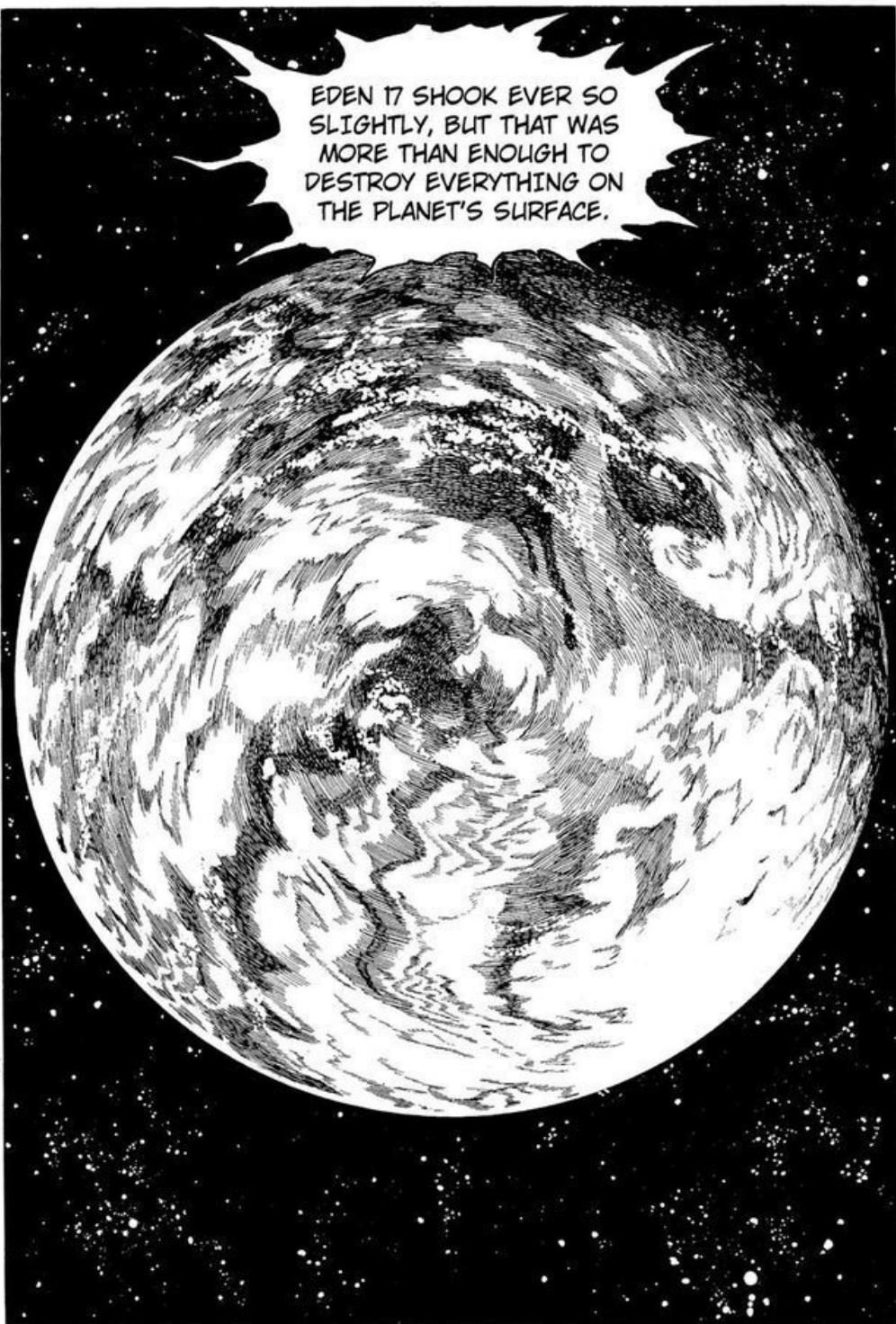




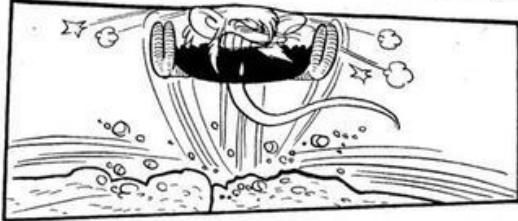
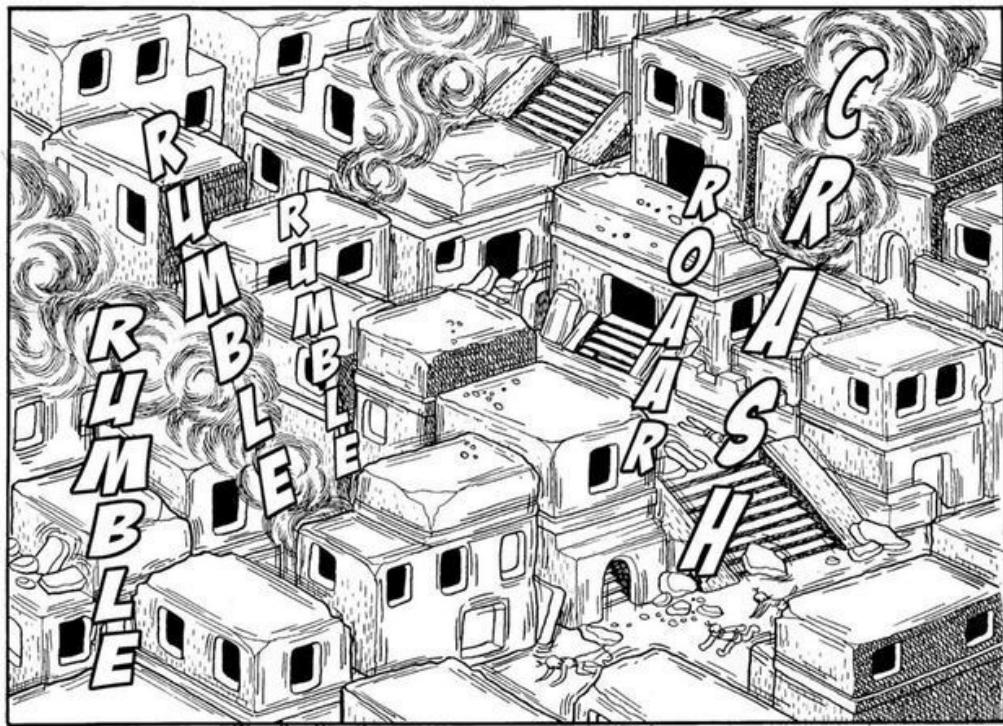


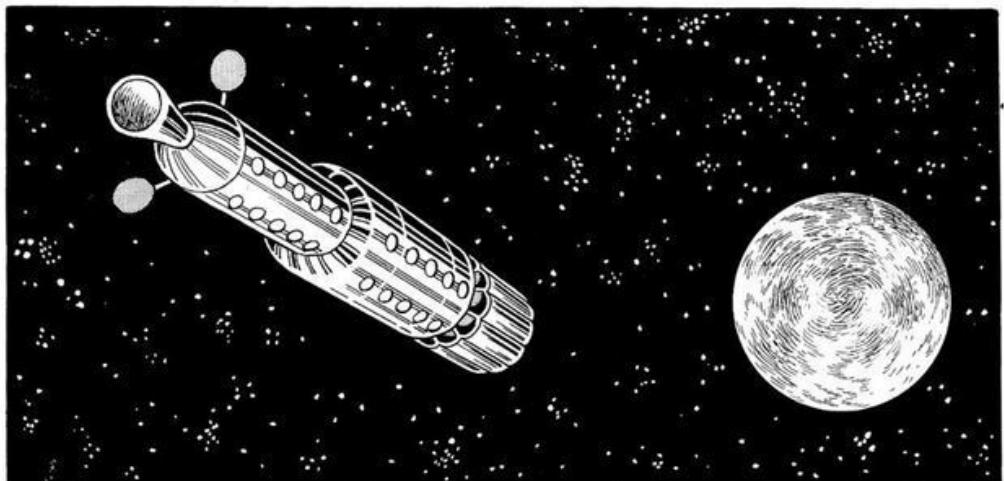


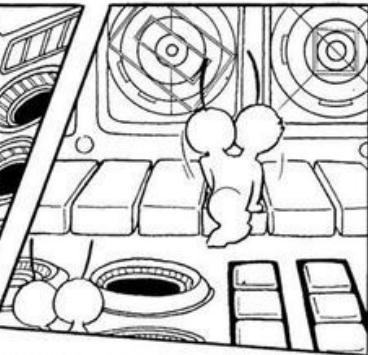
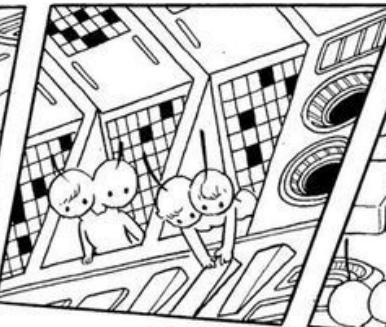
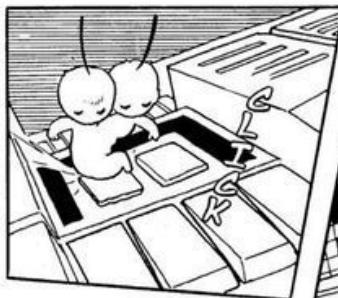




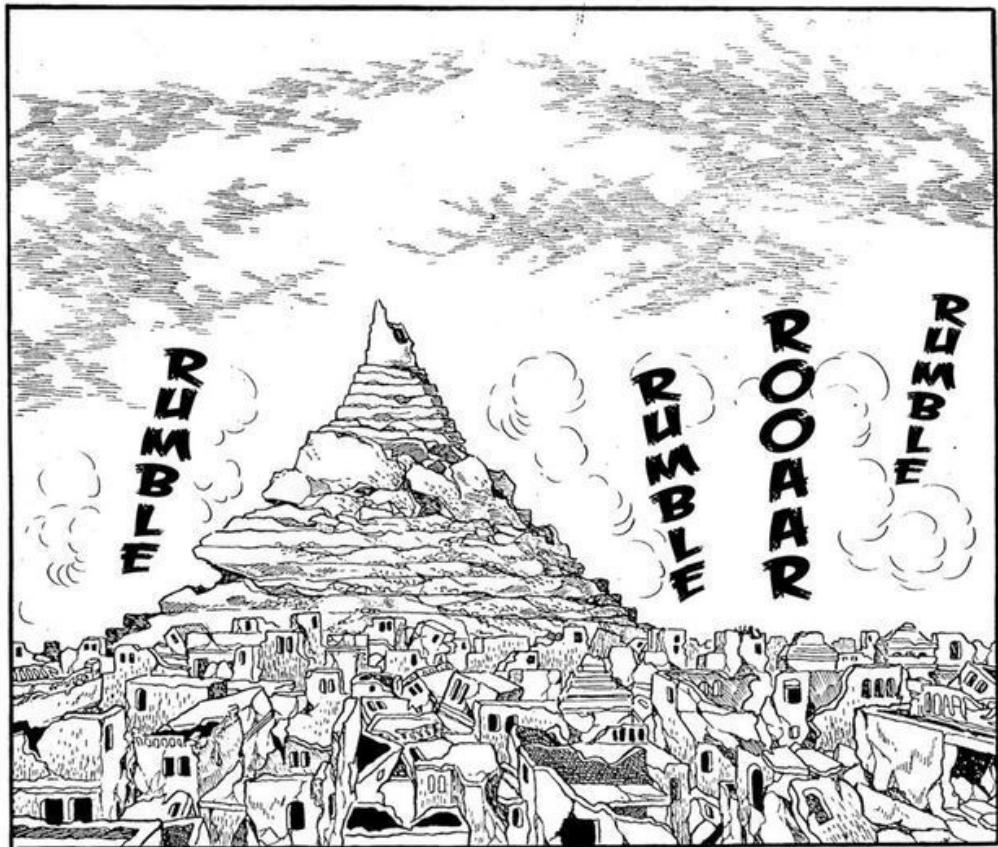
EDEN 17 SHOOK EVER SO SLIGHTLY, BUT THAT WAS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO DESTROY EVERYTHING ON THE PLANET'S SURFACE.









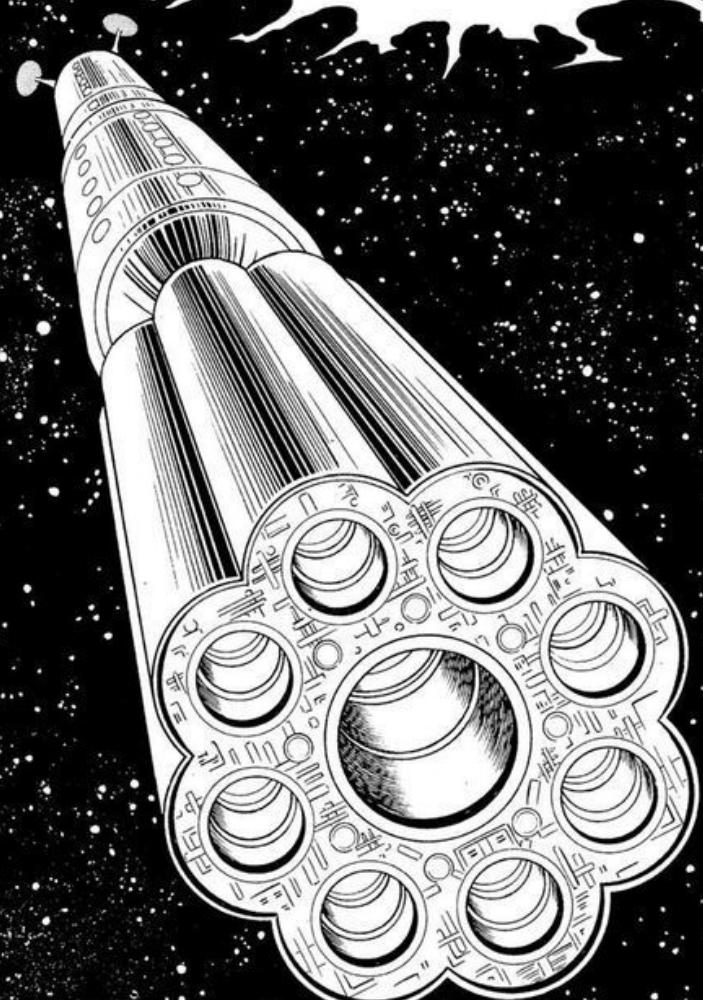


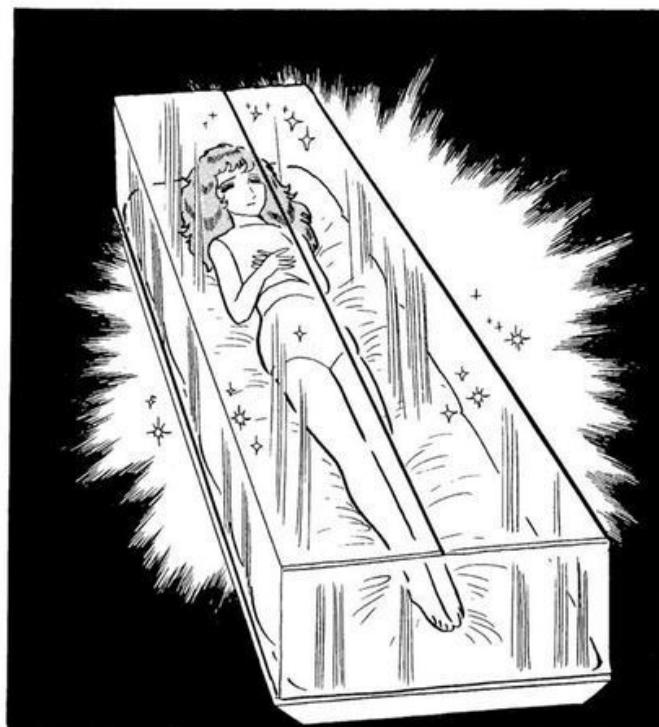
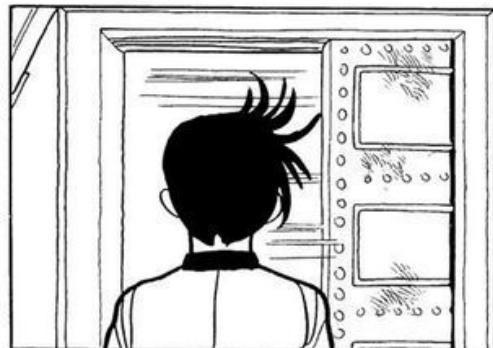
AS ONE
CIVILIZATION
DIES, ANOTHER
IS BORN.

AS EDNA
COLLAPSED INTO
RUINS, NORVA'S
CHILDREN SET OFF
TO CREATE YET
ANOTHER WORLD...



AND AS FOR EDEN 17... NO ONE EVER SET FOOT ON THE RUINED PLANET AGAIN WITH ONE EXCEPTION. ONLY A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE GIANT EARTHQUAKES, GORO MAKIMURA, THE SPACE PILOT, STOPPED FOR A SPECIAL VISIT...





IT'S ABOUT THIS PILOT WHO GETS STRANDED ON A TINY PLANET RULED BY A LITTLE PRINCE...

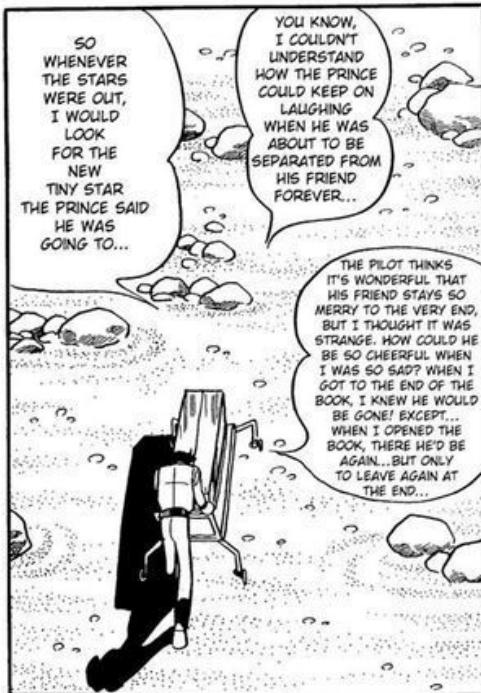
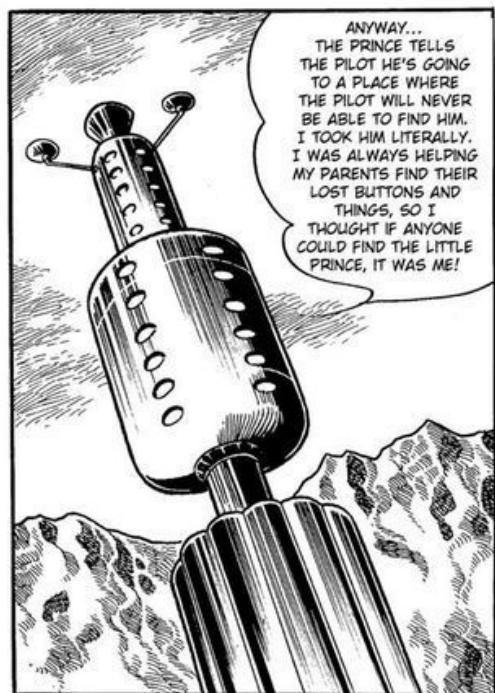
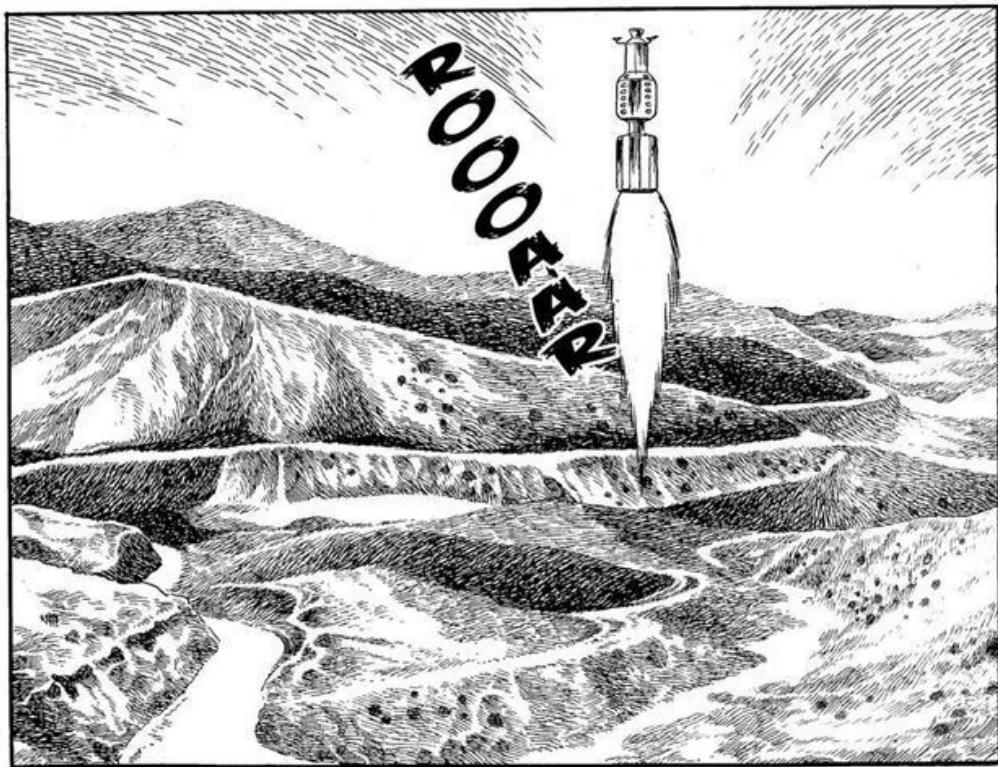
WHEN THE PILOT IS ABOUT TO LEAVE FOR HOME, THE LITTLE PRINCE GETS BITTEN BY A DEADLY SNAKE! SO HE TELLS THE PILOT HE'S GOING HOME TOO... I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE SYMBOLISM UNTIL I WAS MUCH OLDER...

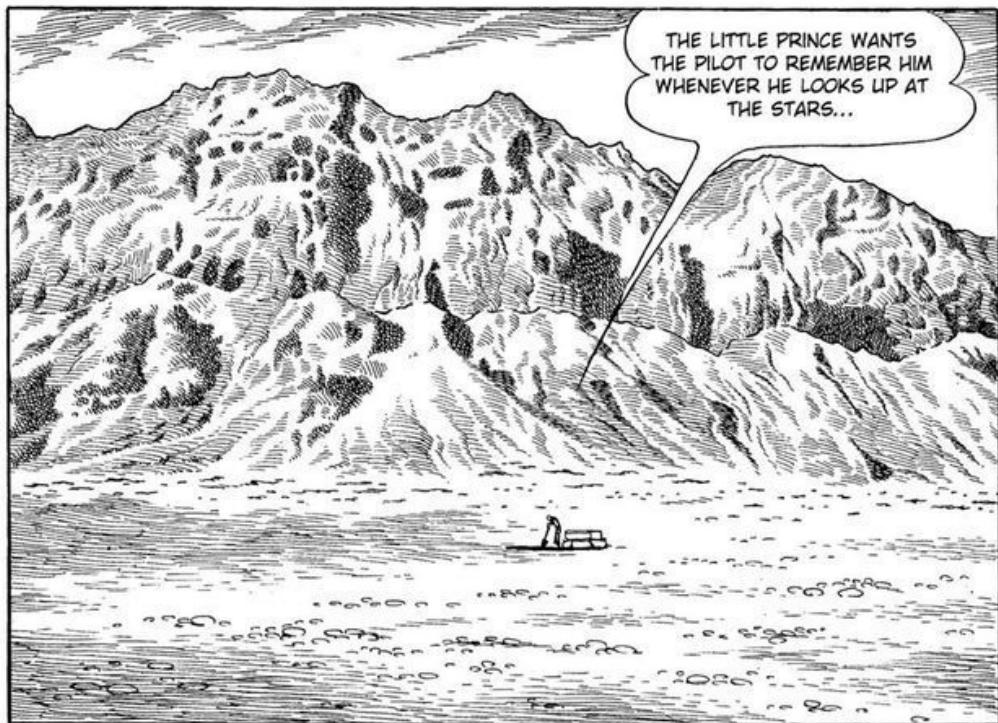
BUT I ALWAYS CRIED WHEN I GOT TO THAT PART.

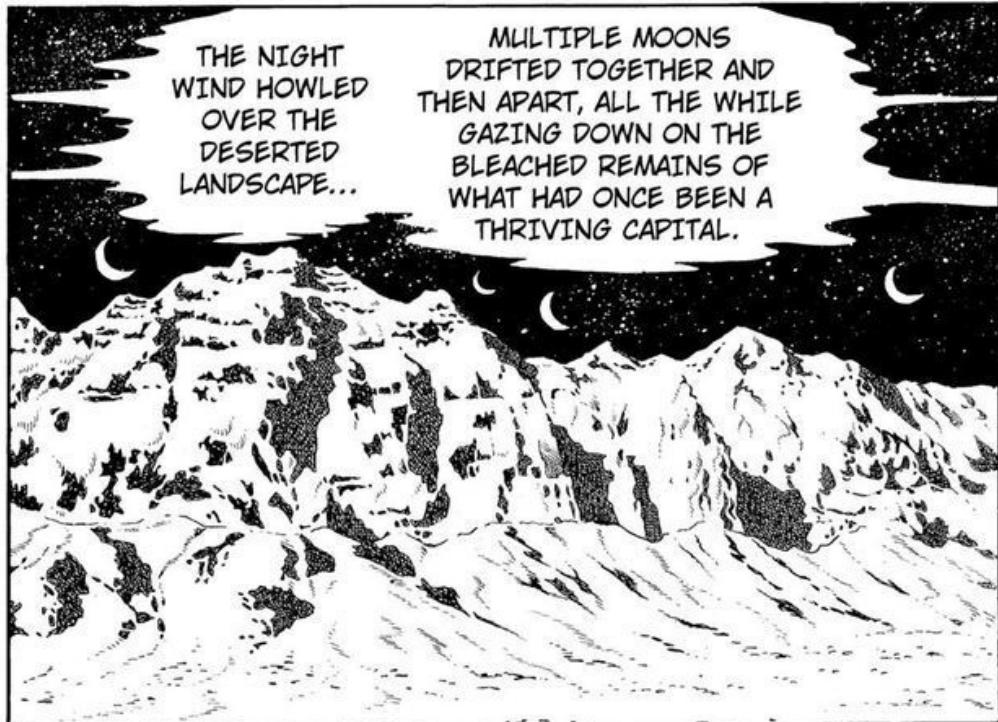
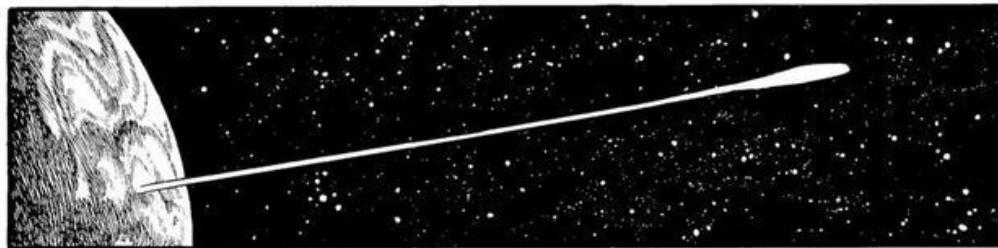
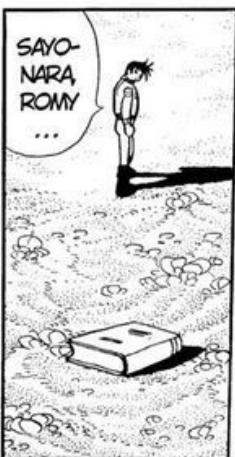
BECAUSE EVEN AS A LITTLE BOY I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE LITTLE PRINCE AND THE PILOT WOULD NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN...

I FELT LIKE I WAS LOSING MY BEST FRIEND...

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ALL THE THINGS THE LITTLE PRINCE SAID AS HE DIED IN THE PILOT'S ARMS, BUT HIS WORDS SOUNDED BEAUTIFUL AND TRUE TO ME ALL THE SAME... HE TALKED ABOUT HOW YOU CAN'T SEE THE REALLY IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE... AND THAT WHEN YOU LOOK AT SOMETHING BIG THAT YOU CAN SEE, IT REMINDS YOU OF SMALL THINGS YOU LOVE THAT YOU CAN'T...









THERE ARE COUNTLESS LEGENDS AND
STORIES IN THE UNIVERSE, BUT THE ONE I
SHALL NEVER FORGET IS ABOUT THE TINY
PLANET NAMED EDEN 17, WHERE A WOMAN
LIVED, AND SUFFERED FOR HER LOVE...

AND HER
NAME WAS
ROMY...



ABOUT THIS EDITION OF PHOENIX: *NOSTALGIA*

The twelve self-contained yet interlinked stories that compose *Phoenix* (*Hi no tori* in Japanese, literally "Firebird") is considered by many to be the summit of Osamu Tezuka's artistic achievement. Tezuka himself referred to *Phoenix* as his "life work." Painstakingly composed over a span decades (initial versions appeared as early as 1954), serialized in a number of venues, and left incomplete with Tezuka's death in 1989, *Phoenix* represents Tezuka's ambitious attempt to push all he knew about the comics medium to address fundamental questions about existence.

All twelve stories in *Phoenix* are linked by the presence of the mythical bird, an immortal guardian of the universal lifeforce. Read in order, the separate stories jump across time, alternating between a distant future and a distant past, converging on the present, with characters from one story being reincarnated in another. The existing twelve stories, totaling over three thousand pages of work, are subtitled "Dawn," "Future," "Yamato," "Space," "Karma," "Resurrection," "Robe of Feathers," "Nostalgia," "Civil War," "Life," "Strange Beings," and "Sun."

This edition, *Phoenix: Nostalgia*, is an English translation of the seventh of the twelve Phoenix stories. "Nostalgia" was first serialized in 1976-8 in the monthly magazine COM, which was published by Tezuka as a venue to feature work too challenging or experimental for inclusion in mainstream manga magazines. The only other portion of *Phoenix* to appear in English previously is a 27-page excerpt from Dadakai's translation of "Karma," which was printed in Frederik L. Schodt's *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*.

AFTERWORD

By Takayuki Matsutani

"Tezuka-sensei came to Earth from a distant universe, and when his mission here was accomplished, he returned to outer space..." This notion was expressed several times in the tremendous flood of condolences given by intellectuals, artists, and others active in the fields of manga, film, music, and publishing when Osamu Tezuka passed away thirteen years ago. At the time, my grief over his death was so fresh I dismissed the idea as mere science-fiction fancy. Later, however, as I began sorting through Osamu Tezuka's legacy, I truly came to believe "Tezuka was a space alien"—it was the only adequate way of explaining his extraordinary artistry.

Look at *Phoenix*. I won't go into an analysis of the story; rather, I will just point out that it is one of many manga series he created, that during his career of forty-odd years, Tezuka drew 150,000 pages like those you see here. Simple arithmetic shows this comes out to ten pages a day—without a single day off! That's not all: Tezuka also produced over sixty animation titles (and *Astro Boy*, for instance, a TV series with two hundred episodes, is counted here as just one title!). Add to this over thirty books of prose, frequent television and radio appearances, lectures, interviews, and travels, not to mention stints as producer or director at various expos and other events...It seems impossible that one person could have done it all, yet Tezuka did. Moreover, he did it all himself, virtually without any help. Then consider the breadth of subjects and genres he tackled: historical works, contemporary issues, science fiction, politics, culture, education, character-based drama, epics, short stories, picture books for toddlers, mysteries, psychodramas, fantasy, nonsense, satire, and stories for boys, girls, young adults, and mature readers...in other words, everything under the sun.

It is extremely unfortunate that Tezuka did not live to see the 21st century, where so many of his stories are set.

In 2001, Japan entered an unprecedented economic recession, while the U.S. was assaulted on September 11 by terrorist attacks that far surpassed our wildest imaginings. These attacks then triggered the retaliatory war in Afghanistan, while in the Middle East the Israeli-Palestinian conflict escalated to new heights of violence. The 21st century has gotten off to a horrific start, and now in 2002, the countdown to Armageddon seems only to have accelerated. As globalization moves forward, the world is getting smaller and smaller. If Tezuka were alive today, how would he feel about all this? What kind of message would he send out to children through his works? Sadly, this is something we cannot know.

Although this *Future* takes place far beyond our time, in the third millennium A.D., Tezuka set *Astro Boy's* birthday in the opening years of the 21st century—April 7, 2003, to be exact—only fifty years ahead of the time *Astro Boy* began serialization in 1952. Just seven years after the devastation of World War II, when Japan was still a poor, scrabbling country, Tezuka imagined high-rises and underground cities, expressways snaking between skyscrapers, TV phones, trips to the moon, masses of industrial robots, and even a revolt by robots. Many of these things now actually exist in today's world, lending proof to Tezuka's astounding visionary powers. But even more extraordinary to my mind is the fact that, at a time when Japanese cities were still in ruins, when the Japanese people were living day-to-day and hand-to-mouth, and as such put economic recovery above all else, Tezuka—in such works as *Jungle Taitei* (which began serialization in 1950) and *Astro Boy*—was addressing environmental issues, calling for coexistence between human beings and other animals, and reminding us to take care of our precious planet Earth. These themes, which also dominate the *Phoenix* series, are the most pressing and relevant issues facing humanity today. That Tezuka's imagination could reach so far amidst the reality of 1950s Japan is the mark of genius.

Tezuka continued working up to three weeks before his death. As his strength waned, and he became too weak even to sit up in bed, he would still struggle with all his might to rise.

"I'm begging you, let me work!" were his final words. His wife desperately tried to calm him down, but Tezuka had

always been a workaholic, a man who worked without rest. What made Tezuka so compulsively creative, so urgently obsessive about his work?

Tezuka experienced World War II as a teenager. He spoke of having seen entire neighborhoods turned into a sea of flames by bombs and charred corpses lying on the streets afterwards. He remembered the deeply comforting sight of lights shining brightly in people's homes the night of August 15, 1945—the first night of peace. The war was finally over, the blackouts a thing of the past, and he savored the return of peace with profound gratitude. But at the same time, he swore to himself never to forget the tragic consequences of war, and to pass on his own experiences of war to the children of the future.

The next year, 1946, Tezuka was studying medicine at Osaka University and also made his debut as a professional manga artist. Although he did brilliant manga work and met with success, Tezuka finished his studies as well and obtained a physician's license. Medicine was, then as now, a highly respected and economically stable profession. In contrast, children's manga were dismissed as cheap entertainment; moreover, only a handful of people could make a living from drawing them. Even so, and in spite of the social conditions of the time, Tezuka chose manga over medicine.

Of course he loved drawing manga, probably loved it more than anything else. But I believe he was driven by something more than that: he chose manga because he felt it was his mission to spread the message of peace and respect for life to the children of the future. And Tezuka probably knew, better than anyone else, that he had staked his future on an amazing medium. Today, computer-enhanced Hollywood movies are taking the world by storm. With computer graphics, people can morph easily into different shapes and interact in the same frame with dinosaurs. Some say that manga and animation have lost their advantages and been surpassed. But for those of us who have read Tezuka's works, Hollywood has only now caught up, just barely, with the expressive capacity of manga. Over fifty years ago, Tezuka knew that manga—back then an art form still in its infancy—could express anything and everything the imagination could conjure, from the mundane to the utterly fantastic.

However, and this is probably the same all over the world, manga has always been viewed as inferior to other art forms, such as painting, prose, music, and theater. Manga was denounced by adults, who claimed it had a bad influence on children. Tezuka battled against the censure of these adults all his life, and this fight for acceptance was another driving force in his passion for work.

Some years ago, Japanese newspapers reported an incident in which children were told to bring all their manga books to school so they could throw them into a big bonfire in the yard. Yes, recent book-burnings in Japan focused on manga. I don't claim that all manga are good. As with any other art form, there is good work and bad work. But Tezuka, conscious of the average adult's bias toward manga, worked indefatigably to change that bias. Most important, of course, he created high-quality manga, but he also appeared frequently on TV, wrote essays and articles for magazines and newspapers, and did everything else he could in his crusade to bring manga the recognition it deserved as a legitimate art form.

In the year Tezuka died, a national art museum held an Osamu Tezuka exhibition. No museum of that stature had ever mounted a manga-related exhibition before. The culture of manga has been supported by many talented artists, most of them inspired by Tezuka, and today, there are numerous manga works that far outstrip novels and films in popularity, scope, and ambition.

The day after Tezuka passed away, a major newspaper eulogized him in an editorial, "Why do Japanese love manga so much? Foreigners apparently find it very strange to see adults engrossed in weekly comic magazines on the train...One explanation for this is that, in their countries, they did not have Osamu Tezuka." Not only was it extremely unusual for a major newspaper, let alone in an editorial, to discuss manga or a manga artist, but this was praise of the highest sort. Yes, manga in Japan today have earned a secure place as a respectable art form.

Osamu Tezuka devoted his entire life to manga, and *Phoenix* is one of his representative works. I hope you enjoy it.

Takayuki Matsutani
President, Tezuka Productions

Translated from the Japanese by Akemi Wegmuller

Note: This article appeared earlier in the first edition of *PHOENIX: A TALE OF THE FUTURE*. The second edition of this title is now available as *PHOENIX: FUTURE*.

PHOENIX AND ME

By Osamu Tezuka



The serialization of *Jungle Taitei* in *Shonen Jump* ended in 1954, and I was at a loss as to what to create next.

Then I saw Stravinsky's famous ballet, *L'oiseau de Feu*. Of course the ballet itself was excellent, but I was especially intrigued by the prima ballerina dancing as the spirit of the phoenix.

The ballet is based on an old Russian legend about a prince that has been captured by a demon. The spirit of the phoenix saves the prince by acting as a guide for his escape. I thought that this passionate, elegant, and mysterious bird would make a wonderful main character comparable to the likes of Leo from *Jungle Taitei*.

Actually, every country has a legend about a mysterious bird such as the phoenix. In these legends, the symbol of supernatural lifeforce takes form as a bird, such as the immortal bird called the Hou-ou from the legend of Hourai-san.

I wanted to utilize this phoenix to portray Japanese history in my own way. The theme would be about man's attachment to life and the complications that arise from greed. The phoenix would be the vehicle that would bring it all together.

As a new challenge, I wanted to start by creating the beginning and then the end of a long story. The story would then return to an ancient period right after the dawn of man. I would then continue to go back and forth, between past and future. In the end, I would set the story where past and future converge—the present. This story, set in the present, would tie all the previous stories together to form a long drama running from the dawn of man all the way to the distant future.

Each story would stand on its own and seem to have nothing to do with the other stories, but the final story would tie everything together—and for the first time, the reader would realize that the structure of the series is such that each story would be just one part of a much longer story. After all, man's history does not have clear divisions or breaks.

Each episode would portray life from various angles and set up different problems. Moreover, the style of each of the episodes would vary from one another, covering a range of genres: science-fiction, war story, mystery, comedy.

I don't know how many more years *Phoenix* will continue, but after it is completed, please go back and read through the whole series again. Otherwise, it will be difficult for me to respond to criticism.

Osamu Tezuka, December 1969

Translated from the Japanese by Andy Nakatani